United Nations A/67/845–S/2013/245

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
15 May 2013

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session
Agenda item 65
Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2012, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2068 (2012), by which the Council requested me to continue to submit annual reports on the implementation of its resolutions and presidential statements on children and armed conflict.

2. The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and special political missions, United Nations country teams and non-governmental organizations. It also involved extensive consultations with relevant Member States and regional organizations.

3. In September 2012, Leila Zerrougui took office as my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Building on the work of her predecessors, she will focus on furthering the implementation of the international legal framework and mechanisms in place for the protection of children affected by armed conflict, in particular by strengthening monitoring and reporting on all grave violations against children, increasing support for the implementation of action plans, enhancing cooperation with Member States and regional organizations to strengthen ownership of the agenda, ensuring rapid response in emerging situations to halt and prevent violations against children and developing strategies to put increased pressure on persistent perpetrators.

4. The present report begins by describing a number of emerging challenges regarding the impact of the evolving nature of armed conflict. It also explores some additional tools to enforce compliance by armed forces and armed groups with child rights obligations and provides an update on cooperation with regional organizations. The report then continues by providing information on grave violations committed against children and progress made by parties on dialogue,

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action plans and other measures to halt and prevent such grave violations.[1] Mali is a new situation covered in this reporting period, while Nepal and Sri Lanka are no longer included following the delisting of all parties within their territories in 2012. The report concludes with a series of recommendations to the Security Council.

5. In line with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, the present report includes in its annexes those parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children in contravention of international law, recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals or recurrent attacks or threats of attack against protected personnel.[2]

6. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.[3]

7. References to cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

II. Evolving nature of armed conflict and emerging challenges for child protection

8. In recent years, United Nations child protection actors have noted with concern that the evolving character and tactics of armed conflict are creating unprecedented threats to children. The absence of clear front lines and identifiable opponents, the increasing use of terror tactics by some armed groups and certain methods used by security forces have made children more vulnerable. Children are being used as suicide bombers and human shields, while schools continue to be attacked, affecting girls' education in particular, and to be used for military purposes. In addition, children are being held in security detention for alleged association with armed groups. Furthermore, drone strikes have resulted in child casualties and have had a serious impact on the psychosocial health of children.

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[1] The six grave violations are killing or maiming of children, recruitment or use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, attacks against schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access for children and abduction of children.

[2] For additional information on conflict-related sexual violence and the listing of parties as responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence during the reporting period, see my report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149).

[3] See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions; article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. Pictet (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).

Military use of schools

9. In its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council expressed deep concern over attacks and threats of attacks against schools and educational personnel, calling upon all parties to cease such violations. The Council also urged parties to refrain from actions that impeded children's access to education, specifically requesting me to continue to monitor and report on the military use of schools in my annual report on children and armed conflict. Schools should serve as a safe haven for children and provide them with protection. The use of schools for military purposes puts children at risk of attack and hampers children's right to education. During the period under review, the United Nations observed that schools were used as military barracks, weapons storage facilities, command centres, detention and interrogation sites and firing and observation positions. Such use of schools not only results in reduced enrolment and high drop out rates, especially among girls, but also may lead to schools being considered legitimate targets for attack.

Detention of children by security forces

10. Another continuing trend in 2012 is the growing practice of States to arrest and detain children with or without criminal charges, be it as a perceived threat to national security, for alleged membership in an armed group or for acts committed while participating in hostilities. Children captured in the course of military operations are often held in detention for long periods, in poor conditions and, in certain cases, without access to counsel or judicial review to assess the lawfulness of their detention. When deprived of their liberty, children are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, including degrading and inhumane treatment and, in some instances, torture. This observed pattern of ill-treatment of children in detention includes physical violence, sexual assault and threats of rape, prolonged stress positions, the use of painful instruments of restraint, solitary confinement, forced nudity and deprivation of food, water and basic facilities. In some cases, children are detained without charge and held in detention without being brought before a judge or being granted access to a lawyer. In others, children have been prosecuted for acts allegedly committed during their involvement with an armed group. Most courts in charge of such cases do not fully apply international juvenile justice standards. Military courts in particular are not appropriate for hearing cases involving children, given that they do not fully recognize the special status of juveniles in conflict with the law.

Impact on children of the use of drones in military operations

11. Over the past years, the United Nations has received an increasingly worrisome number of reports of child casualties in the course of military operations using weaponized unmanned aerial vehicles, or armed drones. I therefore reiterate my call upon relevant States to take all measures necessary to ensure that attacks involving drones comply with the principles of precaution, distinction and proportionality and to conduct transparent, prompt and effective investigations when child casualties may have occurred. In addition, the mixed use of armed and surveillance drones has resulted in permanent fear in some communities, affecting the psychosocial well-being of children and hindering the ability of such communities to protect their children. Reports further indicate that the use of drones has a wider impact on children, especially their access to education. For example, in

some situations, both boys and girls have ceased attending school owing to the fear of drone strikes.

III. Enhancing compliance by armed forces and armed groups

12. Following the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), an Arria-formula meeting with Security Council members, United Nations child protection actors and civil society partners was convened in July 2012 to discuss options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. During the meeting, three main strategies for ensuring compliance by parties with their international obligations on child rights were put forward: increased political pressure by the Council through full use of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict "toolkit" (see S/2006/724); strengthening the sanctions regime by expanding the criteria of sanctions committees and establishing a thematic or ad hoc sanctions committee for violations against children; and closer cooperation between the Council and the International Criminal Court in relation to crimes committed against children. In February 2013, the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a non-governmental organization, organized a follow-up workshop that resulted in a series of recommendations for addressing the issue of persistent perpetrators, focusing on the need for enhanced Security Council action and the efficient use of targeted measures (see S/2013/158).

13. In a continuing effort to find innovative and effective tools to address the growing number of persistent perpetrators, three additional tools are suggested for further consideration: support for national accountability mechanisms; inclusion of child protection issues in peace processes; and linkage between the United Nations human rights due diligence and children and armed conflict frameworks.

Accountability for violations against children

14. During the reporting period, investigations, prosecutions and trials of adult perpetrators of grave violations against children remained rare. Ending impunity for grave violations against children is a crucial element in enforcing compliance by parties with child rights obligations. The verdicts passed in 2012 by international courts against the Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga and the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, in addition to the recent transfer of Bosco Ntaganda, represent significant progress and send a clear signal that child recruitment is a war crime and that perpetrators of violations against children will be held accountable. International justice complements national accountability mechanisms in cases in which national authorities are unwilling or unable to bring alleged perpetrators to justice. While a key challenge in conflict areas is weak political will, often a lack of capacity and resources severely cripples the ability of national authorities to prosecute child rights violations. In this context, the provision of capacity-building support by the United Nations to Governments may assist in reducing the accountability gap.

Inclusion of child protection issues in peace talks and peace agreements

15. Ceasefire agreements and peace processes have been strategic instruments with which to engage armed forces and armed groups on child protection concerns.

Since the mandate of my Special Representative was created, peace negotiations in several country situations have demonstrated that peace talks can provide the context to engage in advocacy with parties to conflict regarding action plans on grave violations against children and other commitments for protection of children. They have also demonstrated that the protection and rights of children constitute a useful entry point for building confidence between parties. While it is better to maintain a separate negotiation track for child protection, parallel processes can mutually reinforce each other at various stages of engagement with parties.

16. Ensuring the inclusion of child protection provisions in peace agreements so as to, among others, regulate the release and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups can provide a useful framework to deepen dialogue between parties and child protection partners. Other key elements in peace agreements are the establishment of 18 years as the minimum age for persons to join the armed forces, including armed groups that are being integrated; provisions ensuring family tracing and reunification; the need to address sexual abuse of children during and after conflict; the commitment to taking all measures to protect children from explosive remnants of war, including landmines; the principle that no amnesty should be granted for adult perpetrators of violations against children; and the principle that children associated with armed groups should be regarded as victims and not as perpetrators.

Human rights due diligence policy and the Security Council framework on children and armed conflict

17. In July 2011, the United Nations instituted a system-wide human rights due diligence policy to regulate the provision of United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces such as militaries and the police. This policy sets out the practical measures that all United Nations entities must take to ensure that any support provided to non-United Nations security forces is consistent with the responsibility of the Organization to respect and promote international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, including the rights of children affected by conflict. United Nations departments, agencies and programmes must assess the risks of the recipient entity committing human rights violations and put in place systems for monitoring compliance. The Security Council-mandated monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, the listing of parties committing such violations and the action plans to stop such violations may serve as complementary platforms to the policy, including to monitor the behaviour of those security forces receiving United Nations support.

18. In various country situations, action plans to cease the recruitment and use of children provide a useful cooperation framework for the United Nations to assist Governments in building the capacity of national security forces to address child rights violations. Such action plans include provisions on the screening of troops to prevent underage recruitment, the appointment of military focal points and the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring compliance. This framework, mandated by the Security Council, could be used to enhance compliance by armed forces with international human rights standards, including under the human rights

due diligence policy framework. What are known as "report cards",[4] used to enforce compliance by individual commanders responsible for the behaviour of their troops, provide an instrument to ensure that no political gain is made by commanders in recruiting children and that a recipient of United Nations support is a legitimate partner for capacity-building support. Adequately applied, the human rights due diligence policy should contribute to strengthening the rule of law and a culture of protection of human rights, including child rights, prevention of violations and strengthened accountability.

IV. Cooperation with regional organizations on child protection in armed conflict

19. The growing involvement of regional and subregional organizations in conflict mediation, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions highlights the importance of developing partnerships between the United Nations and those organizations to promote adequate protection for children affected by conflict in their respective mandates and work. The engagement of regional and subregional organizations in peace support and peace enforcement missions brings to the fore a wide range of child protection challenges, from ensuring that troops uphold international humanitarian law in the conduct of military operations to handling children associated with armed forces and armed groups. While procedures to avoid civilian casualties are generally in place, more efforts should be made to ensure that children are protected during such operations, including by reviewing and strengthening the rules of engagement and the conduct of investigations.

European Union

20. In 2003, dialogue between the European Union and my Special Representative led to the adoption of Union guidelines on children and armed conflict, in which the States members of the Union committed themselves to addressing the impact of armed conflict on children in non-Union settings, in the context of its human rights policy, its Common Foreign and Security Policy and its policies on humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Dialogue is continuing on strengthening and implementing the guidelines, including through longer-term reintegration support for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and the development of child-specific training for States members of the Union participating in crisis management operations. Due consideration should also be given to the list of perpetrators of violations against children included in the present report when providing bilateral or multilateral support to security or justice system reforms in third countries.

African Union

21. With the growing role of the African Union in peace support and peace enforcement missions, such as in Somalia, Mali and Central Africa, child protection challenges during military operations have also increased. In line with Security Council resolution 2033 (2012), on partnerships between the United Nations and

[4] Report cards, as used in the context of Nepal, show compliance by individual commanders with the provisions of an action plan. They are used as a tool to address remaining challenges to full compliance.

regional organizations, in particular the African Union, my Special Representative envisages stronger cooperation with the peace and security mandates of the African Union. In that regard, the upcoming deployments of child protection capacity to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union Peace Support Operations Division are seen as positive steps. The United Nations is also working with the African Union on developing procedures for the handover of children encountered during military operations. Discussions are also continuing on the alignment of national legislation of African States with international instruments on child rights, training for troop contributors to African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions, capacity-building within the African Union Commission and the development of policy guidelines on children and armed conflict.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

22. Over the past few years, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan have jointly taken a number of practical measures that serve as a good basis for further integrating child protection considerations into North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military training, mission planning and conduct of operations. This cooperation is creating a set of best practices currently being integrated into NATO predeployment training modules. Following a high-level briefing by my Special Representative to the North Atlantic Council in January 2012, NATO appointed its Assistant Secretary General for Operations as the high-level focal point for children and armed conflict, in charge of mainstreaming child protection in NATO training and operations. The issue of children affected by armed conflict was also highlighted in the declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago, United States of America, on 20 May 2012. In November 2012, the NATO Military Committee adopted guidelines to integrate Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and related resolutions into NATO military doctrine, training and operational planning and conduct, including quarterly reporting on children and armed conflict and the appointment of technical focal points.

V. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

Afghanistan

23. In 2012, the country task force on monitoring and reporting in Afghanistan reported 66 cases of recruitment and use of boys, some as young as 8 years of age. Verification of such incidents remained a challenge, however, owing to the prevailing situation of conflict and resulting security constraints.

24. During the reporting period, 47 children were reportedly recruited and used by armed groups, notably the Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network, in addition to the Haqqani

network and Hezb-e-Islami. Most were used to manufacture and plant improvised explosive devices and to transport provisions. At least 10 were recruited by armed groups to conduct suicide attacks. On 8 September 2012, a 16-year-old boy was killed while conducting a suicide attack at the entrance to the ISAF headquarters in Kabul. During the attack, seven children were killed and two others injured. There were also reports of cross-border recruitment of children by armed groups, including the Taliban forces, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In several instances, children in detention reported that they had received military training in madrasas in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In February and September 2012, a Taliban spokesperson rejected reports that the Taliban forces recruited, used or abducted children.

25. The official age requirements for enlistment notwithstanding, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Local Police were reportedly responsible for 19 cases of underage recruitment in 2012. In May 2012, for example, a 14-year-old boy was observed in police uniform in a police station in the city of Kandahar, reportedly recruited by a relative. During the reporting period, the country task force engaged in consultations with the Government to assess the presence of children within the ranks of the national police and to prevent underage recruitment. Concern also remained over the informal use of children for security-related tasks by the Afghan national security forces, including the national police, the local police and the army.

26. The country task force documented 189 cases of boys detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres by the Afghan authorities in 2012. A further unknown number of children were held in detention facilities of the national police and the National Directorate of Security. The country task force expressed concern over continuing reports of ill-treatment in those detention facilities, the public display of child detainees in national media and the lack of documentation and follow-up on the release of those children. The exact number of children held in the detention facilities of the international military forces remained unknown. In July 2012, however, the country task force received information that at least 90 children were being held in such a detention facility in Parwan. On 25 March 2013, the facility was transferred to the Afghan authorities. My Special Representative was also informed by the legal counsel of Hamidullah Khan, a Pakistani male, that he had been arrested in August 2008, aged 14 years, by forces of the United States near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and had been detained at Bagram Air Force Base without formal charge, apparently for security reasons, for more than four years. The United Nations has no access or additional information.

27. The country task force reported 18 incidents of abduction involving 67 boys. Verified information attributed the cases to the Taliban, the local police and other pro-Government militias. Children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment, sexual abuse and also intimidation in cases in which families worked or were perceived to be working for the Government or the international military forces. In one case, on 29 August 2012, the Taliban abducted and beheaded a 12-year-old boy in Kandahar Province in retaliation against his brother, an officer in the local police.

28. The country task force documented 1,304 conflict-related child casualties. Of those casualties, 283 cases of killing of children and 507 cases of injuring were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces. A total of 90 cases of killing of children and 82 cases of injuring were attributed to pro-Government forces,

including the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. The remaining cases, in which 116 children were killed and 226 injured, related to explosive remnants of war, crossfire incidents and cross-border shelling.

29. The vast majority of the incidents resulted from attacks with improvised explosive devices (399 child casualties) and suicide attacks, including by child suicide bombers (110 child casualties). Children were also victims of explosive weapons in populated areas, including mortar attacks, shelling and shooting between pro-Government forces and various armed groups (397 child casualties), explosive remnants of war (162 child casualties) and air strikes by the international military forces (74 child casualties). Some of the incidents were acknowledged by ISAF. Furthermore, artillery and mortar shelling from across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border killed at least 1 child and injured 25 others.

30. The country task force received isolated reports of sexual violence against girls and boys by members of armed groups, the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. While only five cases were reported during the reporting period, sexual violence against children continued to be underreported owing to stigmatization and fear of retaliation. Some boys held in detention on charges relating to national security also reported sexual violence or threats of sexual violence upon arrest by the Afghan national security forces or in detention. At least one of those cases related to the practice of *bachah-bazi* (sexual abuse of boys by men in a position of power). In this regard, it should be noted that a joint team, comprising the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate of Security, was established to detect and investigate such incidents.

31. The country task force documented 167 incidents affecting education, of which 49 per cent were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces, 25 per cent to pro-Government forces and 26 per cent to unidentified perpetrators. Armed groups conducted targeted attacks against schools, including using improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, burned schools and abducted and killed education personnel. Armed groups were also responsible for acts of intimidation, threats against teachers and pupils and the forced closure of schools. In 2012, the Taliban issued five statements in which it denied attacking schools and announced that it would set up a commission for education. The Taliban also issued a letter in which it opposed girls' education and threatened girls who continued to attend school, however. Throughout the reporting period, the country task force verified 10 cases of use of schools for military purposes, including 3 by armed groups and 7 by pro-Government forces. It received reports of a further 30 incidents of attacks against health facilities and health personnel, mostly carried out by armed groups. Such cases include abduction of medical personnel and attacks on medical facilities with improvised explosive devices.

32. The country task force verified 33 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, largely attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban. In some areas, however, armed groups also facilitated the provision of lifesaving health and other emergency services, especially in areas not under the Government's control.

33. In March 2012, the Government submitted its first progress report detailing the steps taken towards implementation of the action plan on underage recruitment by the national security forces, which it had signed with the United Nations in January 2011. In particular, the Ministry of the Interior reported the establishment of a monthly monitoring and reporting system, public campaigns on birth registration

and training of Afghan national security forces personnel on age assessment procedures. It also provided information on training on child rights and prevention of underage recruitment conducted in seven Afghan national police zones, in addition to awareness-raising on gender-based violence and underage recruitment in 77 schools and 24 mosques. In parallel, the Ministry pursued efforts to prevent the falsification of national identity cards through the development of a biometric identity card system. Child centres established within national police recruitment centres in Ghor, Badghis, Herat and Farah Provinces documented attempts to enlist children into the national police and the army. Consequently, 122 underage recruits were rejected in 2012. Those encouraging measures notwithstanding, sustained engagement by both the United Nations and the Government is needed to build on the momentum created by the signature of the action plan.

34. The prevailing security situation in Afghanistan and fragmentation of armed groups continued to impede dialogue on the recruitment of children in 2012. The interlinkages between armed groups in Afghanistan made identification of perpetrators and their accountability for violations against children a challenge. Dialogue at the community level, however, continued to prove partially successful, especially with regard to the continuation of vaccination campaigns and the reopening of schools in some parts of the country.

Central African Republic

35. The reporting period saw an overall decrease in the occurrence of grave violations against children. Hostilities resumed in December 2012 between the Government and the Séléka coalition,[5] however, and, limited access notwithstanding, the United Nations received alarming reports continuing into 2013 of recruitment and use of children by armed groups and pro-Government militias, killing of children associated with those groups in the course of military operations and sexual violence against children by armed groups. Although these developments do not fall within the reporting period, the progress achieved and the violations committed in 2012 need to be placed against the backdrop of the recent deterioration of the security situation.

36. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 41 cases of recruitment of children, of which 23 occurred in Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures, 14 in Haute-Kotto prefecture, 2 in Nana Grébizi prefecture and 2 in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) appeared to be responsible for most of the cases, closely followed by the Séléka coalition. In December 2012, the country task force verified 11 cases of rerecruitment of boys by the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale (CPJP fondamentale) and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), both part of the Séléka coalition, in Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures. Eight of those children had earlier been associated with UFDR and three with CPJP and all had been separated from them by child protection actors earlier in 2012. On 24 December 2012, the Central African National Police broke into a reception centre in Bangui and detained 64 children formerly associated with CPJP and UFDR, alleging that they were rebels. The children were paraded through

[5] The Séléka coalition is composed of the Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro, the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale, the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement and the Union des forces républicaines.

Bangui market and questioned by the national police. Following high-level advocacy by the United Nations, they were eventually released. Owing to security constraints, the country task force was unable to verify the presence of children in the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice in Birao (Vakaga prefecture) and in the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain in Kabo (Nana Grébizi prefecture).

37. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 10 cases of killing of children, as opposed to 88 in 2011. This decrease appeared to be linked to the cessation of hostilities between CPJP and UFDR in 2012. During armed confrontations on 23 January 2012 between the Central African and Chadian armed forces on the one hand, and the Front patriotique pour le redressement (FPR)[6] on the other, four children were killed. Overall, the total number of child casualties in 2012 is estimated to be higher, given that the country task force was unable to verify incidents that occurred during the crisis of December 2012 owing to security constraints.

38. Incidents of sexual violence remained a concern throughout 2012. The country task force verified 22 cases, of which 13 were perpetrated by members of FPR, who raped several girls between 9 and 17 years of age in the villages of Damara and Ngoukpe (Ombella-Mpoko prefecture). The country task force also received reports of rape of girls in Bambari, Bria, Ndele and Bangui by the Séléka coalition in December 2012. Between 2 and 5 February 2012, members of the Chadian army in Ndele raped three 15-year-old girls and a 17-year-old girl during their return to Chad after providing support to the offensive by the Central African armed forces against FPR. Although the cases were reported to the Governments of the Central African Republic and Chad, no action has been taken to date.

39. The number of attacks on schools and hospitals decreased, with 6 incidents recorded in 2012, compared with 12 in 2011. In January 2012, for example, the school in Ouadango (Nana Grébizi prefecture) was destroyed when a Chadian army helicopter landed on it during a military operation against FPR. Two other schools were used by CPJP in Yangoudrounja (Haute-Kotto prefecture) and Miamani (Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture) as military outposts. Three health centres in Nana Grébizi, Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures were used by CPJP and medical equipment there was looted. CPJP also continued to use the health centre in Aigbando (Haute-Kotto prefecture), affecting the access to health services of more than 1,000 children.

40. Humanitarian access was severely hampered, especially in Bamingui-Bangoran, Basse Kotto, Ouham, Haute-Kotto, Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou and Vakaga prefectures, owing to the presence of armed groups in those regions. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded an increase in attacks by CPJP, UFDR and the Séléka coalition against humanitarian organizations, with 18 incidents in Bamingui-Bangoran and Haute-Kotto prefectures between October and December 2012. On 15 November 2012, for example, Chadian elements of the tripartite force composed of military units from the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan broke into a non-governmental organization compound in Birao (Vakaga prefecture) and assaulted a humanitarian worker. It is estimated that some

[6] The Front patriotique pour le redressement was formally dismantled in 2012. Its remnants, however, continued to be active in the Central African Republic.

395,200 children were deprived of humanitarian assistance in the affected areas owing to security risks.

41. During the reporting period, CPJP failed to honour its commitment to implement the action plan to end the recruitment and use of children signed by its leadership in November 2011. The splintering of CPJP and a lack of internal cohesion complicated implementation. Children continued to be recruited into the ranks of CPJP and commanders opposed the release of children. During a verification mission by the United Nations in November 2012, 30 children who had been identified by the CPJP leadership for release were prevented from leaving the group. On a separate occasion, on 7 December 2012, CPJP elements in Aigbando prevented the United Nations from separating two girls, aged 14 and 17 years, who had been forcibly recruited by CPJP elements.

42. The implementation of the action plan signed with the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie (APRD) was delayed owing to the arrest of the APRD leadership on 6 January 2012. APRD had signed an action plan in October 2011 and released and reintegrated some 1,300 children in 2009 and 2010. During the period under review, APRD was dismantled and all its elements demobilized.

43. Although the release of children from the ranks of UFDR had begun in 2012, further progress was limited. A first commitment to release all children remaining in its ranks had been signed by UFDR with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2007. In November 2011, UFDR reiterated that commitment and allowed the United Nations to verify the presence of children remaining in its ranks. A formal action plan has yet to be signed. Difficulties in gaining access to CPJP and UFDR in remote areas of Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures also hindered the verification and separation of children.

44. During the reporting period, 345 children (222 boys and 123 girls) were separated from CPJP (157) in Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto and Vakaga prefectures; UFDR (170) in Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures; and escaped from LRA (18) in Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures. In addition, the United Nations estimates that up to 35 children associated with FPR were repatriated to Chad following the dismantling of that armed group in September 2012.

Chad

45. Notwithstanding progress in the implementation of the action plan and although the national army of Chad did not recruit children as a matter of policy, the country task force verified 34 cases of recruitment of children by the army during the reporting period. In June 2012, a joint verification mission by the Government and the United Nations identified 24 children in an army training centre. An additional 10 cases were verified by the head of the army in the Moussoro training centre in September 2012 in the framework of the action plan. All 34 children appeared to have been enlisted in the context of a recruitment drive between February and March 2012, during which the army gained 8,000 new recruits.

46. Following the repatriation of 362 former FPR combatants from the Central African Republic, 26 children between 11 and 17 years of age were identified and informally released on 12 October 2012 during a joint mission by the United

Nations and the Ministry of Social Welfare. An additional 23 children were identified by the International Committee of the Red Cross on 23 October 2012. There were no reports of recruitment and use of children by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) during the reporting period. In March 2012, the country task force received allegations of recruitment of displaced children by unidentified armed elements in Assoungha and Kemiti. These cases are yet to be verified.

47. With regard to the implementation of the action plan signed between the Government and the United Nations in June 2011, my Special Representative intensified dialogue with the Government to accelerate the implementation process. In February 2012, the Government appointed technical focal points in the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Social Welfare and, in May 2012, the Prime Minister appointed his legal adviser as a high-level focal point to support implementation. In addition, the army reiterated its commitment to facilitating access to the United Nations for verification of military sites and issued a series of military directives prohibiting underage recruitment, calling upon the Chief of Staff of the army, the Director General of the National Gendarmerie and the Director General of the Garde nationale et nomade to ensure their full and swift implementation.

48. Those positive steps notwithstanding, further measures are needed to strengthen the screening mechanisms for recruitment by the army and procedures need to be finalized to prevent the enlistment of children. While the issuance of military directives concerning the prohibition of underage recruitment is consistent with the action plan, such instructions need to clearly spell out sanctions for breaches, as set out in the action plan. Furthermore, no investigations into allegations of recruitment and use of children were undertaken, nor was disciplinary action taken against recruiters.

49. The actions taken by the Government for the release, temporary care and reunification of separated children, while encouraging, are not yet in line with the commitments made in the action plan. For example, 18 of the 24 children identified in Mongo were not part of a separation process involving the United Nations and therefore could not benefit from reintegration assistance. Similarly, the 10 children identified in the Moussoro training centre were released and reunited with their families in N'Djamena without receiving reintegration support.

Côte d'Ivoire

50. Since the end of the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in May 2011, the United Nations has observed a decrease in the number of grave violations against children, with 65 cases documented in 2012, as opposed to 336 in 2011. Of those 65 cases, 34 were attributed to the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and 31 to armed elements, consisting of pro-Gbagbo elements and other militia groups operating along the border.

51. The United Nations verified seven cases of recruitment and use of children, all attributed to the national armed forces, during the reporting period. In April 2012, for example, it verified the presence of four children between 14 and 16 years of age at army checkpoints in the towns of Mahapleu, Tai and Duekuoe. In October 2012, it also documented three cases of boys manning an army checkpoint near San Pedro. The boys had been recruited by the army in 2011, when they were 17 years of age.

52. The United Nations documented 9 cases of killing and 21 cases of maiming of children in 2012. Of those cases, 14 were a result of unexploded ordnance, mostly along the border with Liberia, and occurred during or following attacks carried out by unidentified armed groups operating in those areas. Four cases of killing of children were attributed to an attack perpetrated by armed youth groups in the Nahibly camp for internally displaced persons in Duekoue in July 2012. In addition, a child was killed during an operation by the national armed forces in Arrah and another during an attack by an unidentified armed group in Paha-Tabou.

53. During the reporting period, the United Nations registered 21 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against children, of which 9 were perpetrated by the national armed forces and 12 by unidentified armed elements. Such incidents were particularly prevalent in the west of Côte d'Ivoire, where armed elements continued to attack civilians, in particular women and girls, at checkpoints and during patrols.

54. The number of attacks against schools and hospitals significantly decreased during the reporting period, with 7 verified cases in 2012, as opposed to 477 in 2011. The United Nations verified that the national armed forces used a health centre, a primary school and a children's community education centre in Grabou. In addition, they erected checkpoints in the vicinity of four primary schools located in Touba, Ziriglo, Tao-Zeo and Keibly, putting children at risk of attack by armed elements.

55. A national child protection policy was finalized in 2012 and is pending adoption by the Government. On 27 December 2012, the Chief of Staff of the national armed forces designated a child protection focal point and committed himself to developing an operational workplan to work with the United Nations to prevent violations against children, in particular recruitment and use of children. A national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy for former combatants was adopted in August 2012, in which it was stated that efforts had been made to discharge and reintegrate children. That commitment has not yet translated into a clear implementation strategy, however. I encourage the Government to develop such a strategy to ensure the full reintegration of any children identified in the course of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

56. The resurgence of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following the creation of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in April 2012 resulted in a marked increase in the number of grave violations against children. The M23 offensive stemmed from the defection of a significant number of commanding officers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, affecting the capacity of the Congolese security forces. The vacuum left by those troops contributed to an overall climate of lawlessness and insecurity characterized by widespread, systematic and violent attacks against civilians by a variety of armed groups, including the fragmented constellation of self-defence militias commonly known as Raïa Mutomboki, which, together with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), was responsible for reciprocal retaliatory attacks.

57. In 2012, 578 children, including 26 girls, were recruited into armed forces and armed groups. The main perpetrators were Mai Mai groups (263), including the Mai Mai groups under the command of "Colonel Tawimbi" operating in the area of Uvira (116), the Mai Mai groups under the command of "General Lafontaine" and

former Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) elements (29), the Mai Mai Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) of "Colonel Janvier" (21) and other Mai Mai groups. Other perpetrators included FDLR (83), M23 (65), the Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC) (52) and LRA (31). Some 80 per cent of the recruitment cases in 2012 took place in North Kivu and South Kivu.

58. The country task force documented 20 cases of recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces in 2012, including nine boys who were integrated into the national armed forces from Mai Mai groups or recruited by former Congrès national pour la défense du peuple elements who later defected to join the M23 offensive. In addition, 47 boys were arrested and detained by the Congolese security forces for alleged association with armed groups, but were subsequently released after strong advocacy by the United Nations. Most of the arrests took place in North Kivu, mainly involving boys formerly associated with M23. The children were detained by the national armed forces for up to seven months, with some reporting ill-treatment in detention.

59. M23 was responsible for systematic recruitment and use of children. A total of 65 boys between 13 and 17 years of age, including 25 who claimed to be Rwandan, escaped or surrendered from M23 between April and December 2012. A total of 21 of those boys, including 18 claiming to be Rwandan and 3 Congolese, said that they had been recruited on Rwandan territory to fight in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While initially used as porters, most ended up on the battlefield as combatants or escorts of commanders. Testimonies from former M23 combatants suggested that hundreds of children remained in M23. They also reported a high number of child casualties during clashes with the national armed forces and killing, maiming and ill-treatment of young recruits within M23.

60. As a direct result of conflict-related violence, 154 children (including 86 boys and 64 girls) were killed and 113 (including 76 boys and 35 girls) injured in 2012. Between April and September 2012, Raïa Mutomboki killed and maimed children in their houses with machetes during a series of violent attacks against the civilian population in Masisi territory, North Kivu. A coalition composed of FDLR and Nyatura opposing Raïa Mutomboki was reportedly responsible for 51 child casualties. The national armed forces were responsible for 30 child casualties. During clashes with M23 on 28 October in Sake, North Kivu, five children were injured and two killed by mortars fired by the national armed forces. Other perpetrators were Mai Mai groups (30 casualties), M23 (7 casualties), the Congolese National Police (6 casualties) and LRA (2 casualties).

61. During the reporting period, 185 girls, most of whom were between 15 and 17 years of age, were subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence. A total of 11 were under 10 years of age. More than half of the cases were perpetrated in the Kivus. The national armed forces were responsible for 102 cases, including an incident of mass rape. In November 2012, national armed forces elements raped more than 100 female victims, including at least 24 girls, in Minova, South Kivu, as they retreated following the fall of Goma to M23. In another mass rape incident in June 2012, members of Mai Mai Simba raped 28 girls between 10 and 17 years of age in Epulu, Orientale Province. A total of 81 other cases of sexual violence against children were recorded in Orientale Province, mainly perpetrated by Mai Mai elements (50, including 42 by Mai Mai Simba), FRPI (17) and FDLR (11).

62. In 2012, the country task force documented 33 incidents affecting schools (18) and hospitals (15). Most took place in North Kivu (16), South Kivu (11) and Orientale Province (6). Six schools were looted or damaged in arson attacks by armed groups. The national armed forces were responsible for the military use of 11 schools and FDLR for 1 school. In addition, 11 health providers were targeted during the reporting period: 6 in North Kivu, 3 in South Kivu and 2 in Orientale Province. The national armed forces were reportedly responsible for five incidents of looting of medical facilities, while FDLR reportedly pillaged a health centre and abducted a nurse who had denounced a rape perpetrated by FDLR elements. In two separate incidents in July and October 2012, LRA looted two health centres in Orientale Province.

63. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 256 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. North Kivu was the most affected, with a total of 123 cases, mainly in and around Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru territories as a result of clashes between M23 and the national armed forces. In South Kivu, 74 incidents were reported, mostly in and around Bukavu, Fizi and Shabunda. Nine other incidents occurred in Orientale Province. Although in most cases the perpetrators could not be identified, 38 cases were attributed to armed groups, including FDLR, Mai Mai groups and Raïa Mutomboki. Another 26 incidents were attributed to the Congolese security forces.

64. On 4 October 2012, the Government and the United Nations signed an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children, in addition to sexual violence against children, by the national armed forces and security forces. The Government and the United Nations committed themselves to working through a joint technical working group in four areas: the separation and protection of children associated with armed forces and groups; response to child victims; prevention of grave violations against children; and efforts to combat impunity for perpetrators. Progress has been made in the facilitation of unimpeded access for the United Nations to national armed forces battalions and detention centres, resulting in the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, in addition to the joint screening of new recruits. This exercise prevented 269 children from joining the national armed forces in 2012. The integration of armed groups into the national armed forces continued to represent a useful entry point for the release of children. In October 2012, for example, 49 children were separated during a partial integration of Nyatura elements into the national armed forces in North Kivu.

65. In 2012, 1,497 children (1,334 boys and 163 girls) were separated or escaped from armed forces and armed groups. Most (1,453) were Congolese, with a further 40 Rwandans, 2 Ugandans (associated with the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda), 1 South Sudanese and 1 Central African (both associated with LRA). Children escaped or were released from M23 (656 boys), Mai Mai groups (458 boys and 28 girls), LRA (121 boys and 116 girls), FDLR (211 boys and 1 girl), FRPI (121 boys and 10 girls), the national armed forces (96 boys and 5 girls), Nyatura (70 boys) and Raïa Mutomboki (48 boys). In 2012, 5,584 children associated with armed forces and armed groups received support from the United Nations, as did 5,022 child victims of sexual violence.

66. While the efforts of the Government to cease underage recruitment are commendable, the lack of accountability for perpetrators of grave violations against children remains of concern. More has to be done to ensure that adult perpetrators

are duly prosecuted. Of the 185 cases of rape and sexual violence against children by government security forces documented in 2012, only 40 alleged perpetrators were arrested and 4 sentenced. A further 12 commanders involved in the Minova mass rape incident were removed from their posts and handed over to justice.

Iraq

67. In 2012, the country task force reported 355 incidents of grave violations against children. The most affected governorates were Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala, Anbar and Salahaddin. Islamic State of Iraq/Al-Qaida in Iraq (ISI/AQ-I)[7] was responsible for most of the incidents.

68. During the reporting period, the country task force reported 178 incidents of killing and maiming of children, of which 123 were verified. A total of 412 child casualties were recorded, including the killing of 102 children (63 boys and 39 girls) and the injuring of 310 (176 boys and 134 girls) in waves of coordinated attacks throughout the country, mainly using improvised explosive devices. On 3 July 2012, in the Diwaniya district of Qadissiya governorate, an attack with an improvised explosive device claimed by ISI/AQ-I killed 12 boys and 4 girls and injured 16 boys and 6 girls.

69. The country task force also received reports of child recruitment by ISI/AQ-I, mostly in Ninewa (in particular in Mosul) and Salahaddin governorates. In all verified cases, the children were boys between 14 and 17 years of age who were used for support functions such as transporting improvised explosive devices, acting as lookouts and planting explosives. On 17 May 2012, in the Mosul district of Ninewa governorate, the Iraqi security forces killed two boys aged 16 and 17 years while they were reportedly planting a roadside bomb, a technique used by ISI/AQ-I.

70. Allegations were documented in Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar governorates on the reported association of children with the Awakening Councils. These reports indicated that boys were reportedly manning checkpoints after having been locally recruited using false identification documents.

71. As at December 2012, 302 children, including 13 girls, were held in detention facilities and had been indicted or convicted on terrorism-related charges under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (2005). These children, on average between 15 and 17 years of age, had been in detention for periods ranging from two months to more than three years.

72. The prevailing security situation also affected schools and hospitals. During the reporting period, education and health facilities were damaged by improvised explosive devices and small arms fire, and personnel were targeted. The country task force documented 42 incidents in Baghdad, Babil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar governorates, of which 15 attacks against schools and 8 attacks against medical facilities were verified. In addition, 19 education staff and 17 medical personnel were killed or injured in 2012. In an incident on 24 September 2012 in Anbar governorate, a car bomb detonated in front of Al-Kifah Primary School on the first day of school, killing four girls and a boy and injuring six other children.

73. In 2012, the country task force also documented 14 cases of abduction of children, involving seven boys and seven girls. Although the motives for most of

[7] Al-Qaida in Iraq is the military component of the Islamic State of Iraq.

these incidents remained unclear, a strong nexus between the abduction of children and the funding of non-State armed groups in Iraq was observed. ISI/AQ-I was allegedly responsible for most of the incidents. Although most cases related to funding the activities of these armed groups, the abduction of a boy in Mosul in March 2012 was allegedly linked to forced recruitment into Birds of Paradise, the AQ-I youth wing.

74. The country task force further verified three incidents of denial of humanitarian access during the reporting period. In an incident on 13 June 2012, 27 civilians were killed and dozens of others injured when a transport truck used for the delivery of humanitarian supplies exploded in a camp for internally displaced persons near Baghdad. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

75. High-level engagement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011 notwithstanding, a formal government mechanism on grave violations against children is yet to be established. I encourage the Government to establish such an interministerial committee to discuss and follow up on child protection concerns with the country task force.

Lebanon

76. The United Nations reported incidents of grave violations against children resulting from clashes between armed groups in Lebanon and hostilities along its borders. During the reporting period, the level and scale of armed violence affecting children increased, in particular as a result of the impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon. The United Nations documented 24 violations against children, most of which involved killing and maiming, compared with 11 in 2011. Most affected were the border areas between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the north and the Bekaa valley, in addition to the area in and around Tripoli.

77. The United Nations received reports on the participation of children in armed clashes between opposing political groups in Lebanon. In June 2012, for example, four boys between 15 and 17 years of age were arrested for their involvement in a protest against the national armed forces, following the harassment of a resident of the Nahr el-Bared Palestinian camp in Tripoli. The United Nations also received allegations of Syrian refugee children in border areas of Lebanon being pressured into joining armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic. Anecdotal information regarding possible association of children with armed militias, in particular in and around Tripoli, was also prevalent.

78. The increasing number of Syrian refugees crossing into Lebanon created growing threats of exposure of children to landmines and unexploded ordnance. Cross-border shelling and armed clashes inside Lebanon posed new risks to children. Such incidents resulted in the killing of five boys and a girl between 8 months and 15 years of age and the maiming of two girls and three boys between 11 and 15 years of age, mostly in Tripoli and Wadi Khalid, northern Lebanon.

79. In March 2012, armed clashes between rival Palestinian factions in front of a school in the Ein el-Hillweh Palestinian camp, Sidon district, during school hours led to the disruption of schooling. During the incident, children between 6 and 10 years of age were evacuated from the school. On various occasions in July, August, November and December 2012, schooling was further disrupted in Beddawi

Palestinian camp owing to armed clashes in the areas of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli.

Libya

80. In 2012, children in Libya remained affected by tensions that escalated into armed confrontations, mainly in Bani Walid, Kufra, Sirte, Zliten and Sabha, in some instances involving the use of heavy weapons. It should be noted that access to conflict areas and affected populations remained extremely limited throughout the reporting period and that security-related travel restrictions by the United Nations continued to limit the gathering of information. Increased control by the Government notwithstanding, many armed brigades continued to display a lack of discipline and command structure, which led in some instances to grave violations against children.

81. The United Nations received allegations of use of children by armed brigades and observed children carrying weapons on several occasions. During the conflict in Kufra in February 2012, for example, children were seen carrying weapons, manning checkpoints and securing buildings with both the Zwaya and Tabu brigades. In June 2012, the United Nations observed boys between 16 and 18 years of age carrying weapons in Kufra.

82. Child casualties were reported as a result of armed confrontations among brigades, and between brigades and the Libyan army or the Libya Shield brigade (an auxiliary unit of the Libyan army). In accordance with the information received from the United Nations and its partners, at least 12 children (8 boys and 4 girls) were killed and 33 (29 boys and 4 girls) injured in crossfire or through the use of heavy weaponry. In view of the lack of access to affected areas and the limited disaggregated data, it is likely that the number of child casualties remains underreported. In May and June 2012, the Kufra General Hospital registered 10 child casualties, including 2 children killed during armed confrontations between the Zwaya and Tabu brigades. Incidents relating to explosive remnants of war also led to 22 child casualties, mainly in Misrata, Zintan, Kufra, Sirte and Gharyan.

83. According to the Ministry of Education, five schools in Benghazi were attacked while being used as polling stations. On 6 July 2012, one school used for the elections was targeted by small arms fire and improvised explosive devices. On 28 July 2012, an improvised explosive device was dismantled at a school in Abdelrwak, Buhdeima area, which was being used as a polling station. Schools were also attacked when used as shelters for internally displaced persons. On 24 June 2012, in the Zwaya area of Kufra, a school sheltering 20 internally displaced persons was hit by a rocket from the Tabu area, injuring at least five children.

84. During the reporting period, armed confrontations also resulted in damage to health facilities. Sabha Central Hospital was attacked in April 2012 during the fighting between Tabu brigades and an Arab brigade. In October 2012, a hospital in Bani Walid was severely damaged and its equipment destroyed or looted by armed brigades, including the Libya Shield, the Misrata Shield and the 28 May brigades, during confrontations with the social council of Warfalla tribes. In view of the limited security of the medical facilities in Sabha at the time of the fighting in September 2012, combatants carried weapons inside the health facilities. On 24 March 2012, two individuals, including a nurse, were shot inside the hospital. On 11 September 2012, fighting between Alqmazfah Algdadfa tribesmen and the

Supreme Security Committee, which is under control of the Ministry of the Interior, took place inside the Sabha medical centre while patients were being treated. In addition, the United Nations received allegations of threats against medical personnel. On 21 September 2012, medical staff in Sabha protested against the deterioration of the security situation in the hospital, claiming that several staff had been attacked and others threatened.

85. The United Nations recorded several cases of hampering of access for humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas, including through abduction, attacks or threats against humanitarian personnel, in Kufra, Sabha, Benghazi and Misrata.

Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African region (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda)

86. The United Nations continued to receive reports on grave violations against children by LRA in the Central African region throughout 2012. Whereas 22 incidents were reported in the Central African Republic and 71 incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, no incidents were reported in South Sudan in 2012. Even though no incidents have been reported in Uganda since 2006, Ugandan troops continued to pursue LRA. These cases are, however, merely indicative of the actual scope of grave violations against children, given that insecurity and poor infrastructure continued to hamper the reporting of violations. With 416,000 internally displaced persons and 26,000 refugees triggered by LRA, the armed group remained a serious threat to civilians in the region.

87. In the Central African Republic, 23 children were reportedly recruited by LRA in the south-east of the country. During an LRA attack at a mining site in the town of Nzako, Haute-Kotto prefecture, at least six people were killed, including several children. Owing to limited access, however, the exact number of child victims could not be verified.

88. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 58 children (23 girls and 35 boys between 2 and 17 years of age) were abducted by LRA in 2012. In contrast to previous years, they were used mainly as porters to carry looted goods, rather than to participate in attacks. Children continued to be victims of LRA attacks, however. In two separate LRA attacks, a girl and a boy were killed and a girl and three boys injured in Haut Uélé prefecture between January and May 2012. A case in which a girl was raped by LRA was documented in May 2012, while two other girls who escaped from the group in 2012 reported having been raped while in captivity. In total, 41 children (19 girls and 22 boys) escaped or were released from LRA during the reporting period. Between January and October 2012, LRA also attacked two health centres and three schools.

89. In South Sudan, no attacks on or grave violations against children by LRA were reported in 2012. LRA remained a threat to civilians, however, operating from bases inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Between January and December 2012, family tracing and reunification efforts were undertaken for 48 children (34 girls and 14 boys) who were rescued from LRA.

90. Uganda continued to play a major role in combating LRA with the participation of 2,000 troops in the Regional Task Force set up by the African Union

for that purpose. To implement its standard operating procedures on the repatriation and handover of children separated from LRA, as agreed with the United Nations in June 2011, the army received implementation training in Uganda in May and June 2012. The armed forces of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan have yet to adopt standard operating procedures for the handover of children who escape from LRA.

Mali

91. The serious deterioration of the security situation in Mali in 2012 was characterized by a large number of grave violations against children by various armed groups. At different points in time, armed groups active in northern Mali formed shifting coalitions, involving joint military operations and co-location of troops. On the basis of the limited information available, membership of these armed groups has been extremely fluid, which presents a challenge when attempting to establish command responsibility for the violations against children reported throughout 2012. Although the prevailing situation of insecurity severely limited access, the United Nations received numerous reports that armed groups, including the Mouvement national de liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA), the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), Ansar Dine and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), were responsible for extensive recruitment and use of children. Initial information indicated that hundreds of children, mainly boys between 12 and 15 years of age, were enlisted during the reporting period. Children were used by the groups to man checkpoints and conduct patrols. Shifting alliances among armed groups resulted in the rerecruitment of children by different groups. As MNLA progressively lost control over northern Mali to Ansar Dine and MUJAO, some children shifted their loyalty to Ansar Dine, in particular those belonging to the Kidal-based group of Iyad Ag Ghali.

92. Reports of abduction and forced recruitment of children notwithstanding, many children allegedly joined armed groups for reasons of poverty or ethnic affiliation. *Talibé* children, entrusted by their parents to marabouts, or religious teachers, for Islamic instruction, were particularly vulnerable to recruitment, in addition to children belonging to the Tuareg, Arab, Peuhl and Songhai ethnic groups. MUJAO and Ansar Dine reportedly paid child recruits and their parents. Children as young as 12 years of age were enticed by MUJAO with the promise of receiving Koranic education. Children associated with MUJAO were seen standing guard in a secondary school in Douentza and carrying out menial tasks in a gendarmerie camp in Taoussa. MUJAO was reportedly also responsible for the forced recruitment of 15 children between 13 and 18 years of age in Menaka, following clashes in Konna, leading families to send their children to the Niger to prevent recruitment.

93. Children, both boys and girls, were also associated with pro-Government militias. For example, in the area of Mopti/Sévaré, which is controlled by the Government, the United Nations received reports of recruitment of children by Ganda Izo, Ganda Koy and the Forces de libération du nord. As some militias are being integrated into the Armed Forces of Mali, there is an urgent need for screening and separation of these children.

94. Children were also captured by the Malian armed forces during military operations in northern Mali. At least four children allegedly associated with

MUJAO were detained by the Malian authorities, one of whom was reported to have been transferred to a juvenile rehabilitation centre. On 9 March 2012, French troops captured five child combatants in the course of military operations and transferred them to the Malian authorities. The children were immediately handed over to UNICEF for interim care. While children are currently being automatically transferred from the French armed forces via the Malian gendarmerie to UNICEF, the need remains to formalize this arrangement through standard operating procedures for the handover of children encountered during combat.

95. There is very limited information available for 2012 on the killing and maiming of children. Nevertheless, 17 incidents were reported during 2012 in which 6 children were killed and 22 maimed by explosive remnants of war. During the offensive, armouries of the national armed forces were pillaged, especially in Timbuktu, and weapons and munitions were scattered in the vicinity of towns. Armed groups also laid mines and left other explosive devices in northern Mali in anticipation of military operations, resulting in the killing and maiming of children. Between March and August 2012, 28 serious incidents were allegedly caused by mines and explosive remnants of war in northern Mali, killing 24 children. It is further alleged that children associated with armed groups were killed and maimed during the French and Malian military campaign initiated in January 2013, including during aerial bombardments. Some of those children were reportedly used as human shields by armed groups. Concern also remained over inter-ethnic reprisals against children of Arab or Tuareg origin, including by the national armed forces.

96. Sexual violence against girls by armed groups was reported to be widespread and systematic in northern Mali (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and part of Mopti). In total, 211 cases of sexual violence (including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, sexual violence in places of detention and gang rape) by MNLA, MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM have been reported since January 2012. The United Nations gathered information on cases of girls who had been raped by several members of armed groups. Cases of forced marriage of women and girls by MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM were reported in all regions under their control. Parents were reportedly coerced to hand over their daughters for marriage to members of those groups, resulting in rape and sexual slavery. The girls were often raped repeatedly by several men in the groups' camps. Reports have also been received that girls from the Bella ethnic group, a Tuareg caste considered to be inferior to the so-called "light-skinned" Tuareg, were particularly vulnerable to abduction for purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation.

97. The MNLA offensive and subsequent takeover of northern Mali by armed groups had a devastating effect on children's access to education. A total of 115 schools were looted, damaged, bombed, used for military purposes or contaminated with unexploded ordnance. Armed groups reportedly interfered in the conduct of classes, demanding that their interpretation of sharia law be taught. As at February 2013, 86 per cent of pupils remaining in the north still lacked access to education.

98. In October 2012, the Government established an interministerial working group to prevent grave violations against children. The objectives of this entity include public information campaigns to prevent recruitment and use of children and joint verification missions with international partners to ascertain the presence of children in self-defence militias. On 7 February 2013, an interministerial circular

was signed on the prevention, protection and return to families of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

Myanmar

99. In 2012, there were encouraging commitments and actions by the Government to prevent and end grave violations against children. The country task force, however, continued to document violations during the reporting period. Most took place during military clashes in Kachin and Shan States between the Tatmadaw Kyi and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and between the national armed forces and the Shan State Army North and the Shan State Army South. Other incidents resulted from bomb explosions and unexploded ordnance in Kayin State and Sagaing Region. To date, the country task force has remained constrained by capacity, access and security impediments that presented a challenge for comprehensive monitoring and verification.

100. While the number of cases of recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces decreased because of prevention measures and strengthened recruitment processes, recruitment and use of children remained of concern in 2012. The number of complaints of underage recruitment by the national armed forces increased from 236 in 2011 to 274 in 2012 as a result of enhanced awareness among the national armed forces and the general public of recruitment and the channels for raising such cases, including through the International Labour Organization (ILO) forced labour complaint mechanism, local-level child protection groups, national and international protection actors and direct approaches to military bases and relevant ministries. The country task force also received information that children had been deployed to the front line with exposure to both combat and non-combat duties. Nine children recruited by the national armed forces were deployed during the reporting period to Kachin State, where they were captured and detained by KIA, which notified ILO early in 2012 and released them in January 2013.

101. In addition, the country task force received reports of association of children with non-State armed groups. Verified reports indicated that children were present in the ranks of KIA and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). One case in April 2012 involved the abduction of three boys of 14 years of age by KIA from a village in Wine Maw township. The country task force also received information on the use of boys by UWSA to man checkpoints and secure offices. Reports further alleged that UWSA continued to require that one child in each family in the Wa autonomous zones be sent to UWSA for what it termed "military service". Children were also reportedly present in the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Karenni Army.

102. Children were also victims of landmines, unexploded ordnance, mortar and grenade attacks and crossfire between the national armed forces and non-State armed groups. Late in 2012, hostilities intensified between the national armed forces and KIA in Kachin State, including air strikes and shelling by the national armed forces, in addition to the use of improvised explosive devices by KIA. The country task force verified that 13 boys and 4 girls between 3 and 17 years of age were killed in five incidents in Kayin State, Kachin State and Sagaing Region. The national armed forces and non-State armed groups (including the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army, the Karenni National Progressive

Party/Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army,[8] UWSA and KIA) also continued to use landmines to restrict the movement of people, hinder the mobility of troops and mark areas of operations.

103. On 27 June 2012, the Government and the United Nations signed in the presence of my Special Representative an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces. Subsequently, a senior national armed forces liaison officer was appointed to oversee its implementation and a joint committee comprising the country task force and senior officials of the national armed forces and government ministries was created. The country task force and the national armed forces also developed detailed operational procedures for the identification, verification and discharge of children.

104. Throughout September 2012, military focal points in the national armed forces carried out training sessions on the action plan in each regional command, targeting officers responsible for the identification and registration of children within their battalions. The national armed forces also issued directives on the implementation of the action plan and developed communication materials for distribution to the military rank and file. In addition, the national armed forces launched a process of identification and verification that led to the discharge of 42 children in September 2012. The national armed forces reported that, since October 2012, a board had been established in each regional command to review the age of all new recruits. The Commander-in-Chief also issued a directive in which he stated that recruiters of children would face action under section 374 of the Myanmar Penal Code and section 65 of the Defence Services Act. In that regard, the Government reported to the country task force that, by the end of November 2012, 30 commissioned officers and 154 non-commissioned officers had been subjected to disciplinary measures for recruitment and use of children.

105. The country task force, however, remained concerned with regard to United Nations access to national armed forces operational regiments. In December 2012, the national armed forces informed the country task force that access to those regiments would be subject to consideration upon completion of United Nations monitoring of recruitment units and training facilities.

106. Pursuant to the action plan, the Government also committed itself to facilitating processes to end child recruitment by non-State armed groups and to facilitating the release and reintegration of all children within its sovereign territory. During the reporting period, however, efforts to secure the signature of the action plan and provision of support to identify and discharge children from the national armed forces were accorded priority.

107. In 2012, a total of 97 underage recruits were discharged from the national armed forces. Of those underage recruits, 42 were released under the framework of the action plan during a discharge ceremony in September 2012, while 45 were released under the ILO forced labour complaint mechanism. In October 2012, the country task force submitted 25 new cases of underage recruitment received through the ILO complaint mechanism to the national armed forces senior liaison officer for verification under the action plan framework. In addition, the Government reported

[8] The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army listed in my eleventh annual report (A/66/782-S/2012/261) changed its name in 2011 to the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army as the armed wing of the Klo Htoo Baw Karen Organization.

that, in 2012, 538 potential new recruits had been rejected at the recruitment screening stage for being underage.

Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel

108. In 2012, Palestinian and Israeli children continued to be affected by the prevailing situation of conflict. In the West Bank, the number of Palestinian children killed and injured during demonstrations and violence by Israeli settlers remained a serious concern. Throughout the reporting period, there were several escalations of violence between armed groups in Gaza and Israeli forces that resulted in the killing and injuring of Palestinian children and the injuring of Israeli children. During the reporting period, 50 Palestinian children (40 boys and 10 girls) were killed and 665 (640 boys and 25 girls) injured in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and 17 Israeli children were injured in Israel, marking a significant increase compared with 2011.

109. In the West Bank, four Palestinian boys were killed and 552 Palestinian children, including 16 girls, injured during the reporting period. Of the children killed, two were victims of unexploded ordnance and two were shot by Israeli forces during demonstrations. On 12 December 2012, a 17-year-old boy was shot and killed at a checkpoint at the entrance to Al-Masharqa neighbourhood in the old city of Hebron. Since mid-November 2012, an increase in the use of lethal force by Israeli forces has been observed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, also affecting children. A total of 436 Palestinian children were injured during demonstrations in clashes with the Israeli forces: 69 during military operations involving live ammunition, physical assault, gas canisters, rubber-coated metal bullets or tear gas inhalation; 39 as a result of settler violence; and 8 as a result of unexploded ordnance. Although no children were killed by Israeli settlers in 2012, 18 were injured as a result of physical assault, stone throwing or the use of Molotov cocktails or live ammunition. A total of 21 children were injured as a result of intervention by Israeli forces following clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers.

110. In Gaza, 46 Palestinian children were killed during the reporting period, the vast majority in November 2012 during an operation in Gaza codenamed "Pillar of Defence". During the first two weeks of November, armed violence escalated intermittently as the Israeli forces attacked various targets inside Gaza and Palestinian armed groups fired rockets into southern Israel. Between 14 and 21 November 2012, 32 Palestinian children were killed by Israeli air strikes. In three other incidents, Palestinian children were allegedly killed by Palestinian rockets aimed at Israel that fell short and landed in Gaza. Outside the November escalation, another 11 children were killed in Gaza: 3 as a result of Israeli air strikes, 3 by Israeli tank shells; 1 boy during an incursion into Gaza by Israeli forces; 1 boy as a result of mishandling a weapon found at home; 1 boy while mishandling unexploded ordnance; and 2 other children as a result of Palestinian rockets aimed at Israel that fell short and landed in Gaza.

111. A further 113 children were injured in Gaza as a result of Israeli military operations, during demonstrations or as a result of unexploded ordnance. In one particular incident, on 30 March 2012, 23 boys were injured during demonstrations, 21 as a result of the use of live ammunition by Israeli forces and 2 owing to severe tear gas inhalation.

112. During the reporting period, 17 Israeli children were injured. In November 2012, during the escalation of violence in Gaza, Palestinian armed groups launched rockets at southern Israel. On 15 November 2012, 14 Israeli children, including an 8-month-old baby, were injured. Three other Israeli children were injured inside the West Bank. On 10 July 2012, two settler children were injured during clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in Al-Khalil neighbourhood of the old city of Hebron. On 8 April 2012, a girl was injured when the vehicle in which she was travelling was hit by an object thrown by an unidentified person on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

113. On 3 June 2012, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was reportedly killed by an Israeli air strike on a motorcycle on which members of the Abdul Qader Al-Husseini armed group were travelling in Abasan, southern Gaza. On 21 February 2012, Israeli forces reportedly used a Palestinian boy as a human shield. The 15-year-old boy from Beit Ummar was taken from his home by Israeli forces and forced to walk in front of a military jeep at which villagers were throwing stones, in violation of an Israeli Supreme Court order forbidding the use of human shields. During the reporting period, four other cases of attempted use of children by Israeli forces for military intelligence purposes were reported in the Megiddo and Al-Jalame interrogation sites. These cases involved Palestinian boys between 15 and 17 years of age who were arrested and offered money, entry to Israel and a car or mobile telephone in exchange for intelligence on activities in their villages.

114. In 2012, Palestinian children continued to be arrested and detained by Israeli forces for alleged security offences and prosecuted in juvenile military courts. At the end of December 2012, 194 boys and 1 girl, of between 12 and 17 years of age, were in Israeli military detention for alleged security infractions. Of those children, 119 were being held in pretrial detention and 76 had been convicted and were serving a sentence. According to the Israeli Prison Service, 73 child detainees were transferred to prisons inside Israel during the reporting period. Such transfers contravene article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

115. In 2012, in relation to those cases of military detention, 115 cases of ill-treatment were documented through affidavits taken by lawyers. All 115 Palestinian boys reported being subjected to cruel and degrading ill-treatment by the Israeli forces and the Israeli police, including but not limited to the practice of blindfolding and painful restraint during arrest, transfer and interrogation; strip-searching; verbal abuse; physical violence, including beating and kicking; and threats of violence. A total of 21 boys were also held in solitary confinement for a period ranging from 1 to 20 days at Al-Jalame, Hasharon and Petah Tikva interrogation sites, in addition to the Megiddo prison inside Israel.

116. On 1 August 2012, Israeli Military Order No. 1685 established that children arrested and detained by the Israeli forces must be brought before a judge within four days of arrest, instead of the previously allowed eight days. Another military order, issued on 28 November 2012, which will enter into force in April 2013, will further halve the length of pretrial detention, stipulating that children under 14 years of age should be brought before a judge within 24 hours of arrest and children between 14 and 18 years of age within 48 hours. Although this represents progress, the duration remains double the maximum pretrial detention period for Israeli children under Israeli juvenile law.

117. In 2012, a significant number of attacks on schools and education facilities continued to be reported in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. A total of 321 cases were reported in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in 2012, compared with 46 in 2011. Seven attacks against Israeli schools were reported.

118. A total of 25 incidents of attacks on schools were reported in the West Bank in 2012. In 11 instances, the Israeli forces entered or attempted to enter school premises during search operations, to remove Palestinian flags from the rooftops of schools or for other unknown reasons, causing disruption to classes and sometimes damage to schools. In another four instances, the Israeli forces fired live ammunition or tear gas at schools. In a worrisome spike in incidents, on four separate occasions, Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement threw stones at the school in Urif (Nablus). In one particular instance, on 23 April 2012, the stone-throwing by settlers triggered clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers from the Yitzhar settlement, after which tear gas was fired at the Palestinians, injuring eight children. In addition, on six occasions, Israeli forces also entered the Haj Ma'zoz Al Masri Secondary School for Girls in Nablus to secure the area for Israeli settlers during night-time religious events.

119. The vast majority of the incidents affecting schools in Gaza occurred between 14 and 21 November 2012, during the Israeli military operation. A total of 285 school buildings suffered damage as a result of Israeli air strikes on nearby locations, including 60 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school buildings. Six UNRWA health centres also suffered damage during the escalation in November.

120. In southern Israel, six school buildings were damaged by rockets launched by Palestinian armed groups during the hostilities in November 2012. One additional Israeli school in Beersheba was damaged on 11 March 2012 by rocket fire from Gaza. No injuries to children were reported as a result of the incident, given that the school had been closed that day as a precautionary measure.

Somalia

121. In 2012, the country task force documented 4,660 cases of violations against children, of which 2,051 concerned recruitment and use of children (2,008 boys and 43 girls). Children were reportedly recruited by armed forces and armed groups from camps for internally displaced persons, schools and villages. Al-Shabaab also coerced teachers into enlisting pupils.

122. Al-Shabaab was the main perpetrator (1,789 cases of recruitment and use of children), followed by the Somali National Armed Forces (179 cases). A total of 53 of those cases took place after the Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan on 3 July 2012 to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children.[9] On 9 September 2012, five boys between 16 and 17 years of age were recruited by the national armed forces in Beletweine district, Hiran Region. They were previously associated with Al-Shabaab and had escaped to join the government forces. In addition, it was reported that, in April 2012, a girl carried out a suicide attack at the

[9] With the establishment of a federal parliament on 20 August 2012, the Transitional Federal Government is now referred to as the Government of Somalia and its military forces as the Somali National Armed Forces.

National Theatre. Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, a Government-allied militia integrated into the national armed forces in 2012, was responsible for 51 cases of recruitment and use of children. On 18 February 2012, six children between 15 and 17 years of age were recruited by the militia in Beletweine district.

123. In 2012, the country task force verified 296 cases of killing of children (228 boys and 62 girls) and 485 cases of maiming of children (326 boys and 132 girls). The killings were perpetrated by unknown armed groups (111), Al-Shabaab (94) and the national armed forces (70). According to the World Health Organization, the four major hospitals in Mogadishu treated weapons-related injuries of 230 children under 5 years of age during the period under review. Most of the cases verified by the country task force involved crossfire and mortar attacks. On 10 March 2012, for example, stray bullets injured three children between 11 and 14 years of age during fighting between Al-Shabaab and the national armed forces in Yurkud village, Berdaale district, Bay Region. Children were also allegedly killed for spying. On 18 January 2012, a 15-year-old boy associated with Al-Shabaab was killed by Al-Shabaab in Rabdhure district, Bakool Region, for allegedly spying for the national armed forces. On 16 September 2012, the country task force received allegations of ill-treatment of children implicating the national armed forces in Afgoye district, Lower Shabelle Region. According to reliable sources, the national armed forces arrested and detained 10 children on suspicion of being Al-Shabaab members. It is alleged that they were subjected to ill-treatment and acts tantamount to torture while in police custody. That information, however, could not be verified.

124. During the reporting period, the country task force received reports of 213 cases of sexual violence committed against 210 girls and 3 boys, mostly in central and southern Somalia. The incidents were attributed to the national armed forces (119), Al-Shabaab (51) and unknown armed groups (43). Following the end of the transitional period and establishment of the new Government, the Government issued a statement on 25 November 2012 in which it acknowledged that sexual violence was being perpetrated by its national armed forces and committed itself to ending the violations. My Special Representative will work with the Government to decisively address the issue.

125. During the reporting period, Al-Shabaab (51) and the national armed forces (14) were also responsible for attacks on schools. Al-Shabaab was responsible for a further 11 attacks on hospitals in 2012 in Hiran (4), Lower Juba (4), Middle Shabelle (2) and Middle Juba (1).

126. The country task force received information on 1,533 cases of abduction (1,458 boys and 75 girls) during the reporting period. Most were reported in central and southern Somalia and were perpetrated by Al-Shabaab (780) and the national armed forces and allied militias (720). On 28 May 2012, for example, around 30 children between 12 and 17 years of age were taken into custody by the national armed forces in Afgoye corridor, Lower Shabelle Region, on suspicion of being members of Al-Shabaab. The country task force is following up on this incident. Most of the southern and central parts of Somalia remained inaccessible, however, owing to the volatile security situation.

127. In 2012, humanitarian access continued to be affected by attacks targeting humanitarian workers, roadblocks and looting of humanitarian supplies, mainly in southern Somalia. There were a total of 96 attacks on aid workers or their assets,

27 incidents of aid interventions (aid diversions, lootings, confiscations or sabotages) and 20 cases relating to denial of movement.

128. On 3 July 2012, the Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, and, on 6 August 2012, another action plan to end killing and maiming of children. Progress towards their implementation was limited, however, owing to the election period and the appointment of the new Government. The President nevertheless pledged his strong commitment to implementing both action plans. The Government reported that it had issued strict guidelines prohibiting the recruitment of children into the national armed forces and that the implementation of the action plan was in the planning process.

129. In October 2012, the Government established, together with the United Nations, a joint technical committee in charge of the coordination and implementation of the action plans. On 7 and 8 October 2012, the country task force held a validation workshop with the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior to finalize standard operating procedures for the handling and release of children who are captured, who surrender or who are otherwise separated from armed groups and who find themselves in the custody of the national armed forces or AMISOM. AMISOM efforts to reduce civilian casualties notwithstanding, slow progress has been made in the implementation of the civilian casualty, tracking, analysis and response cell. AMISOM has, however, instituted training on protection of women and children as part of the predeployment training for all AMISOM troops.

South Sudan

130. During the reporting period, the country task force verified the recruitment and use of 252 boys between 14 and 17 years of age. Of those boys, 106 were associated with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), 68 with militia allied to David Yau Yau, Gabriel Tanginyang and Peter Gadet, 53 with militia allied to Hassan Deng in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State and 25 with militia allied to General James Kubrin Ngare. Children associated with SPLA were identified in convoys protecting high-ranking officials, wearing SPLA uniforms, during SPLA military recruitment drives and in SPLA barracks.

131. The country task force reported that 18 boys and 5 girls were killed and 23 boys and 8 girls injured in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Western Bahr el Ghazal States during the reporting period. In two separate incidents in 2012, a child was reportedly killed and a 6-year-old boy reportedly injured during clashes between SPLA and militia allied to David Yau Yau in Jonglei State. In addition, in April 2012, four children were injured by explosive remnants of war in Bentiu, Unity State. The country task force also received reports of child casualties as a result of aerial bombardments.

132. During the reporting period, the country task force obtained information on eight cases of sexual violence affecting 12 girls. SPLA soldiers in Jonglei, Unity and Western Bahr el Ghazal States were allegedly responsible for six of those incidents. The country task force also reported the abduction of girls for sexual violence purposes in the context of inter-communal conflict. For example, a girl in Pibor, Jonglei State, was abducted by armed men of the Lou Nuer tribe, held in captivity for several weeks and raped. In another incident in February 2012, two girls were raped by unidentified armed men in military uniforms in Mayendit, Unity State.

133. SPLA reportedly used 18 schools for military purposes, 13 of which were already being so used since 2011. By the end of 2012, 15 of the schools had been vacated. The military use of the schools reportedly affected more than 13,000 children. In October 2012, Juba Day Secondary School, in Central Equatoria State, was closed for a week following a violent crackdown on student protests by the South Sudan National Police Service using live ammunition.

134. In 2012, 129 children were abducted in the context of inter-communal conflicts and a further 243 were documented missing. While 110 abducted children were recovered in Jonglei State during the reporting period, the whereabouts of the others remain unknown. In July and August 2012, two girls aged 10 and 13 years were allegedly abducted by SPLA members in Jonglei State. Although the United Nations inquired with SPLA about the cases, no feedback has been received to date.

135. The country task force received reports of at least 197 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Forceful entry into humanitarian compounds, harassment and physical assault of humanitarian workers hampered the ability of humanitarian actors to gain access to the civilian population. During the first quarter of 2012, nine incidents of violence against humanitarian personnel by SPLA soldiers were reported in Central Equatoria and Warrap States.

136. On 13 March 2012, my Special Representative witnessed the signing of a revised action plan by SPLA as a renewed commitment to ceasing and preventing the recruitment and use of children. Since the signature of the action plan, a national committee, consisting of the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, SPLA military judge advocates, the SPLA spokesperson and the United Nations, has been established to implement the provisions of the action plan.

137. A system of screening and early identification of children has been established. Consequently, 421 boys and 29 girls who sought to voluntarily enlist in SPLA in 2012 were rejected. SPLA also issued a series of military orders to vacate schools and to grant unimpeded access to the United Nations. The country task force was granted access to 71 SPLA barracks during the reporting period. The Government also initiated the development of civil registration and birth registration systems. Of the 252 boys identified as associated with SPLA and militia groups, 230 were released, reunited with their families and provided with reintegration support.

Sudan

Darfur

138. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded 31 cases of recruitment and use of children: 11 by the Popular Defence Forces, 4 by the Central Reserve Police, 3 by JEM, 2 by the Sudanese Armed Forces and 11 by unidentified armed groups. Three boys between 14 and 17 years of age were abducted for recruitment purposes by JEM in northern Darfur, but managed to escape and were subsequently detained by the national armed forces before being released and reunited with their families.

139. In 2012, 62 children (44 boys and 18 girls) were killed and 57 (42 boys and 15 girls) injured during hostilities in Darfur. Of those children, 27 were killed by stray bullets during clashes between unidentified armed groups, 26 during air strikes by the national armed forces and 9 by unexploded ordnance. The increase in the

number of child casualties — 119 children in 2012 compared with 71 children in 2011 — is attributed to the escalation of violence between government forces and armed groups during the reporting period, in addition to inter-ethnic fighting in various areas of Darfur.

140. The country task force reported 36 cases of rape of girls between 5 and 17 years of age in 2012. In areas under the Government's control, several documented incidents of rape were attributed to government forces, including the national armed forces, the Central Reserve Police, the Popular Defence Forces, the police and the Border Intelligence Forces. Perpetrators also included unidentified armed men. These figures do not reflect the actual scope of sexual violence against children in Darfur, given that access to some areas remained limited.

141. In 2012, movement restrictions for humanitarian actors on security grounds continued to affect the delivery of assistance to children. Restrictions on movement by road from El Fasher to El Daein, for example, heavily affected humanitarian aid. On four separate occasions, refusal of clearance for humanitarian actors to gain access to areas not under the control of the Government impeded the provision of humanitarian assistance to children.

142. Among developments in the reporting period, a focal point to engage with the country task force on child protection concerns was appointed by JEM in January 2012. Following further consultations, on 11 September 2012, JEM issued a command order in which it prohibited the recruitment and use of children and, on 25 September 2012, it submitted to the United Nations a commitment to release children and to report on progress made. In November 2012, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid also issued a command order in which it prohibited the recruitment and use of children. Sudanese Liberation Army/Historical Leadership submitted two progress reports in which it outlined steps taken towards ending recruitment and use of children. Although there were allegations of recruitment and use of children by that armed group during the reporting period, they could not be substantiated. Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will, JEM/Peace Wing and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace Wing have been removed from the annexes to the present report, since no information was available on recruitment and use of children by these groups in 2012, nor that the groups were militarily active.

143. The Government informed the country task force that the Ministry of Defence had approved the development of an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, which would apply also to other groups affiliated with the national armed forces, including the Popular Defence Forces. That commitment was reiterated to a United Nations technical mission that visited the Sudan in April 2013.

144. In January 2012, the Government established a national human rights commission to monitor and investigate human rights and child rights violations. In January 2012, the Police Commissioner created a national coordination mechanism for family and children protection units. Efforts were also made by the police and its Family Child Protection Unit to investigate cases of violations against children, an exercise that resulted in the arrest of a number of alleged perpetrators. On 18 July 2012, for example, a court in Zalingei, Central Darfur, sentenced a soldier to 20 years' imprisonment for the rape of an 8-year-old girl.

145. A list of 120 children released by Sudanese Liberation Army/Historical Leadership was submitted in 2011 to the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and

Reintegration Commission and the United Nations. The registration process of these children began in January 2013. In addition, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur provided training on child rights and child protection to 118 commanders and combatants of the Liberation and Justice Movement in El Fasher and Nyala.

Three areas (South Kordofan, Blue Nile State and Abyei)

146. During the reporting period, 125 boys between 11 and 17 years of age were reportedly recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups in South Kordofan (31), Blue Nile State (46) and Abyei (48). Of those boys, 65 were reportedly recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N), 12 by the Popular Defence Forces and 48 by SPLA. In addition, the United Nations continued to receive allegations of recruitment and use of children by SPLM-N in areas not controlled by the Government. Verification of those allegations remained impossible, however, owing to access restrictions.

147. In 2012, the United Nations received reports that 31 children had been killed in Kadugli and 1 in South Kordofan/Abyei. In that regard, nine incidents of aerial bombardments and shelling resulted in the killing of 10 boys and 10 girls, some only a month old. Six incidents involving 15 children were attributed to the national armed forces, while three other incidents were attributed to SPLM-N. Three boys were killed and one maimed by unexploded ordnance. A total of 43 children were reportedly injured in South Kordofan (42) and Abyei (1): 41 as a result of aerial bombardments and shelling by the national armed forces and SPLM-N, 1 by crossfire and 1 by unexploded ordnance.

148. Although the Government allowed United Nations national staff limited access to the areas under its control for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, movement of international staff outside the capitals of South Kordofan and Blue Nile State was restricted. No humanitarian assistance could be delivered to children in areas held by SPLM-N. The Government continued to impose restrictions on access for humanitarian actors both in government-held and non-government-held areas in Blue Nile State and South Kordofan. Verification of reports of grave violations against children was impossible in areas not controlled by the Government.

149. In a verification process with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the United Nations supported the registration of 18 children formerly associated with armed groups, who were reunited with their families and received reintegration support. An additional 42 children escaped from an SPLM-N camp and were registered with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Blue Nile State. During the reporting period, SPLM-N committed itself to engaging in dialogue with the United Nations to address the presence of children within its ranks.

Syrian Arab Republic

150. The Syrian conflict has entered its third year. The situation for children has deteriorated in all areas of concern. Among the well in excess of 70,000 people estimated to have been killed to date, many thousands are children. Sizeable numbers of children have been killed and gravely injured in shelling and fighting, while thousands more have seen family members killed or injured or have lived through shelling, missile firing and heavy aerial and artillery bombardment of their

homes, schools and hospitals by the government forces, resulting in severe psychological distress. The use of terror tactics by armed opposition groups, such as car and other bombs, in civilian areas, including near schools, and the association of children with such armed groups rose sharply over the reporting period.

151. Children in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be killed, injured and maimed by heavy artillery, air strikes, crossfire and explosive remnants of war as a direct result of the conflict in incidents that occurred in Damascus, Homs, Dera'a and Aleppo, among others. Refugee children inside the Syrian Arab Republic have also been directly affected. Palestinian and other refugee children have been killed, injured, forced to flee their homes and live in need in shelters for internally displaced persons. Government air strikes and bombardment predominated in areas controlled by the Free Syrian Army and other opposition groups. Government forces and allied *shabbiha* militia continued incursions in areas of contested control. On 25 May 2012, government soldiers and *shabbiha* members reportedly entered El Houleh village, Homs governorate, and killed 100 civilians, including at least 41 children. The local school, where people had sought refuge, was reportedly bombed by government forces in July 2012, resulting in the death of two children.

152. The use of heavy weaponry and the alleged use of cluster munitions in heavily populated areas resulted in child and other civilian casualties. In a village near Ar Raqqah, survivors alleged that dozens of cluster munitions had been dropped on their homes over a period of days in March 2013. A witness recounted seeing two boys, aged 9 and 13 years, suffer injury and the loss of their hands and limbs when they picked up unexploded cluster bomblets. Further reports were received of cluster munitions being used in Hamah, Ar Rastan, Mohassan, Aleppo and Idlib. Although government forces were allegedly responsible for most of those casualties, opposition groups have also reportedly acquired and used heavy weapons against the civilian population.

153. The United Nations also received reports of opposition armed groups engaging in terror tactics, such as car and other bombings, near schools and in public places, resulting in the death of and injury to children and other civilians. It was not possible to attribute responsibility for specific incidents that led to child casualties, owing to the nature of the operational structure of armed opposition groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and the lack of access for the United Nations to carry out investigations.

154. Detention, torture and ill-treatment of children for alleged association with the opposition continued to be a worrying trend. In that regard, there were a number of accounts of sexual violence against boys to obtain information or a confession by the State forces, largely but not exclusively by members of the State intelligence services and the Syrian Armed Forces. Child detainees, largely boys and as young as 14 years of age, suffered similar or identical methods of torture as adults, including electric shock, beatings, stress positions and threats and acts of sexual torture. For example, a 16-year-old boy from Kafr Nabl, Idlib governorate, reported witnessing the sexual assault and killing of his 14-year-old friend while in detention. According to witnesses, a number of children continue to be held as ransom for parents and other relatives associated with opposition fighters to force them to turn themselves in to the State authorities.

155. Information was received that the national armed forces used children as human shields. In an incident in May 2012, the national armed forces reportedly

raided the local primary school in As Safira, Aleppo governorate, took hostage 30 boys and 25 girls between 10 and 13 years of age and walked them in front of their forces in order to flush out a local Free Syrian Army unit that had recently taken the town. There were also a number of allegations of use of children between 15 and 17 years of age by *shabbiha* members in village incursions in Hamah governorate in January 2013.

156. The United Nations has received a growing number of reports of use of children by armed opposition groups, such as the Free Syrian Army. From accounts received, child association with the Free Syrian Army is often linked to an older relative facilitating recruitment or in instances in which the child has lost all members of his or her family. It is also linked to the fact that there is no central recruitment authority among the Free Syrian Army and that many forces are clan-based or village-based. Consequently, children, on average between 15 and 17 years of age, have been used in both combat and support roles, such as food and water portering and loading bullets into cartridges. A former Free Syrian Army combatant of Kafr Zeita village stated to the United Nations that children as young as 14 years were largely used for loading bullets, delivering food and evacuating the injured. Medical staff reported treating boys between 16 and 17 years of age injured in combat who were associated with the Free Syrian Army. For example, a 16-year-old boy receiving medical treatment for wounds suffered in the Salah-ad-Din neighbourhood of Aleppo recounted that he had spent three months with a Free Syrian Army unit. He had been injured in fighting against government forces in the first week of March 2013. It should also be noted that accounts stated that some Free Syrian Army units, including in Dayr Az Zawr city, had rejected children who had approached them to join or had released associated children when so requested by their families.

157. The United Nations received information suggesting that schools and hospitals were targeted by the Government. Reports were also received of schools being used and damaged by armed opposition groups. A total of 167 education personnel, including 69 teachers, were reported to have been killed as at the end of February 2013, while 2,445 schools were reported to have been damaged. Some 2,000 schools are being used as shelters for internally displaced persons. In some areas, children have not attended school in more than 18 months. Palestinian children residing in refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic are equally affected by the conflict. The education system in particular has been severely affected. As at April 2013, 69 of 118 UNRWA schools were closed, with only 23,700 of more than 67,000 enrolled pupils attending classes.

158. Reports indicated that schools continued to be bombed, shelled and raided by government forces. On the other hand, several parties to the conflict were responsible for using schools for military purposes. There are numerous incidents of government forces entering schools and using them either as a temporary base or as a detention facility. The Free Syrian Army allegedly used schools in a number of areas as bases, makeshift hospitals and, in some instances, ammunition storage and detention centres. In one example, Free Syrian Army elements in Kafr Zeita, Idlib governorate, used two classrooms of the Al Shahid Wahid Al Jusef High School as barracks for a number of days while children were attending classes.

159. The United Nations received further information that hospitals and makeshift hospitals had been bombed and, in some cases, specifically targeted by government

forces, allegedly because they housed wounded Free Syrian Army elements. Reports have also been received of government forces entering hospitals and arresting young men and boys suspected of being Free Syrian Army sympathizers. In one instance, eyewitnesses stated that men and boys who sought assistance at the Kendi State Hospital in Aleppo were arrested for association with the opposition before entering. The hospital also housed a government sniper position. Attacks or threats of attacks against medical personnel, in addition to reprisals for medically assisting those suspected of links to the opposition, were also documented.

160. As noted in my report on sexual violence in conflict (A/67/792-S/2013/149), United Nations monitors received credible allegations of sexual violence against women and girls, in particular during raids conducted by the Syrian military in Homs and other areas, but also in detention facilities or at checkpoints. The United Nations is also concerned about allegations of abduction and rape of women and girls by armed opposition groups in cities, villages and neighbourhoods perceived to be in favour of the Government.

161. The conflict has also created an environment in which it has become extremely difficult to reach affected populations for humanitarian purposes. Medical care remained inadequate in contested areas, with many children succumbing to their wounds for lack of proper or timely attention. Lastly, fighting continued to force populations to leave their homes, with the latest United Nations figures indicating that there are more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries and 4.25 million persons displaced inside the country, half of whom are children.

162. My Special Representative was invited by the Government to assess first-hand the conflict's impact on children, to discuss strengthening the monitoring of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic and to better advocate child protection. During her visit, she met relevant ministers, the United Nations country team, civil society members, internally displaced persons and children. In this regard, I welcome the Government's commitment to cooperating with the United Nations in monitoring grave child rights violations and to establishing an interministerial committee on children affected by conflict. The Government has also informed my Special Representative that it will take measures to ensure the education of displaced children and to rebuild destroyed or damaged school facilities. My Special Representative was also able to reach out to Free Syrian Army commanders in Homs and Rif Damascus governorates regarding their responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and prevent association of children with their forces. In addition, I am encouraged that my Special Representative received a communication from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in which it committed itself to collaborating with the United Nations to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

Yemen

163. The signing of the transition agreement in Yemen, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and implementation mechanism in November 2011 and the launch of the political transition in February 2012 led to a decrease in the number of grave violations committed against children. Nevertheless, hostilities between the Government and Ansar al-Sharia/Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and their effect on the civilian population remained of concern and resulted in grave violations against children.

164. In 2012, the United Nations verified 53 reports of recruitment and use of children between 13 and 17 years of age. Of those cases of recruitment, 25 boys were recruited by the government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the Republican Guards, the newly integrated First Armoured Division, the military police and the central security forces.[10] Many children recruited by the national armed forces were enlisted through brokers, such as military officers, family members and local sheikhs, who further facilitated their recruitment through false documentation and birth certificates. Some children reported fear of reprisal if it became known that they had enlisted with false documentation. Children often received a monthly stipend or retainer from the unit that recruited them.

165. The United Nations continued to face challenges in monitoring violations by the Al-Houthi armed group operating in Sa'ada governorate. Reports of recruitment and use of children could not be verified owing to security constraints. Nevertheless, the United Nations could verify the use of three boys by Al-Houthi in Hajja governorate, who were armed, manning checkpoints or "guarding" health centres. With regard to association of children with pro-Government militias, the United Nations documented the case of three children aged 13, 16 and 17 years, respectively, who were recruited and used for checkpoint duty by the Popular Resistance Committee in Abyan governorate. The recruitment and use of children by Ansar al-Sharia appeared to have increased during the reporting period. Of the 19 children verified to be associated with Ansar al-Sharia, 2 boys were killed and 3 injured in combat. The others are believed to still be with the group.

166. In 2012, at least 50 children (45 boys and 5 girls) were reportedly killed and 165 (140 boys and 25 girls) maimed. Many child casualties related to landmines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. While in most of the incidents the perpetrators remained unknown, some have been attributed to the national armed forces, Ansar al-Sharia and AQAP. Five incidents were reported of drone strikes allegedly targeting AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia in Abyan, Shabwa and Al Bayda governorates, resulting in the killing of two boys and maiming of six boys and a girl. In one such incident, a 16-year-old boy was killed by a drone strike allegedly targeting an AQAP leader. A further 14 boys were killed, and 51 boys and 10 girls maimed, by landmines or unexploded ordnance during the reporting period. Attacks with improvised explosive devices killed 11 boys and maimed 16 boys and 1 girl. Two children were killed while conducting a suicide attack.

167. An emerging concern with regard to Ansar al-Sharia is the sexual abuse of boys associated with the group. The United Nations documented that three boys recruited by the group had been subjected to sexual violence. The United Nations further verified seven cases of forced marriage of girls between 13 and 17 years of age in Abyan governorate with members of Ansar al-Sharia. In two of those cases, a 15-year-old girl and a 17-year-old girl were offered as "gifts" by their brothers to leaders of Ansar al-Sharia in exchange for being allowed to join the group. The number of forced marriages is likely to be underreported owing to stigmatization and fear of reprisal.

[10] On 19 December 2012, the President of Yemen issued a decree to define a new structure for the armed forces, in effect abolishing the Republican Guards and the First Armoured Division. In another decree, on 21 February 2013, the President declared the restructuring of the Ministry of the Interior, which includes the renaming of the central security forces to the special security forces.

168. During the reporting period, the United Nations received reports of 165 incidents of attacks on schools, most of which occurred in Sana'a and Abyan governorates. Ansar al-Sharia, the First Armoured Division and Al-Houthi were responsible for the incidents. In 61 incidents, teachers and pupils were threatened or intimidated. In another 57 incidents, schools were physically damaged by shelling, aerial bombardments and improvised explosive devices. Such attacks mainly took place during clashes between the Republican Guard and armed tribal groups, and in hostilities between government forces and Ansar al-Sharia. Supporters of Ansar al-Sharia also damaged schools and destroyed textbooks in an attempt to prevent the reopening of schools. In addition, a United Nations-supported child-friendly space providing psychosocial assistance to children in Sana'a was looted by the First Armoured Division. An additional 36 incidents involved the military use of schools for weapons storage, sometimes resulting in their closure.

169. A total of 11 attacks on hospitals were reported in Hajja and Aden. In Hajja, Al-Houthi was responsible for nine incidents of intimidation of health personnel and eight cases of military use of medical facilities, resulting in the closure of health centres affecting some 5,000 children. The central security forces were responsible for two incidents in Aden in which they forcibly entered hospitals in search of patients and damaged the medical facilities.

170. The United Nations received reports of 33 incidents of denial of humanitarian access affecting children. This figure included 16 incidents of hijackings of United Nations or non-governmental organization vehicles; the abduction of 16 humanitarian personnel; 5 cases of threats against or arrests of humanitarian personnel; and physical attacks against humanitarian workers and their compounds.

171. Tangible progress was made in dialogue with the relevant parties on the preparation and implementation of action plans to halt and prevent violations against children. On 18 April 2012, the Minister of the Interior sent a letter to the police and other relevant authorities in which he ordered the full implementation of Police Commission Law No. 15 (2000), which stipulated 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment, and the release of any children present in the ranks of the government security forces. During an official visit to Yemen in November 2012, my Special Representative met the President and other senior government officials, in addition to the leadership of Al-Houthi and the First Armoured Division. During her visit, the Government committed itself to developing an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. The leadership of Al-Houthi also agreed to enter into a dialogue with the United Nations on the issue. In addition, the President issued a decree to prohibit underage recruitment and immediately thereafter established an interministerial committee to serve as liaison for the development of an action plan.

B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations

Colombia

172. In 2012, hostilities continued between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Colombian national army. On 18 October 2012, however, peace talks were initiated between the Government and FARC-EP in Oslo.

173. Widespread and systematic recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups was documented in 2012. Although the full scale and scope remain unknown, around 300 cases of recruitment and use were reported by the country task force in 23 of the 32 departments and in Bogotá. In 2012, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute documented 188 children separated from FARC-EP, 37 from ELN, 34 from armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia and 4 from the Ejército Popular de Liberación.

174. FARC-EP and ELN continued to recruit and use children. In February 2012, a 10-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, both wearing FARC-EP uniforms, were found in Meta during a raid by the Colombian army. The country task force also verified cases of recruitment and use by non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. In March 2012, for example, a 16-year-old boy was offered money to join the Ejército Revolucionario Popular Anticomunista de Colombia (ERPAC) in Meta. In March and April 2012, threats of recruitment of children by FARC-EP, ERPAC, Las Aguilas Negras, Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños were reported in the departments of Antioquia, Cordoba, Guaviare and Meta. In Guaviare, the threats forced seven boys between 14 and 18 years of age into displacement.

175. Children were also killed and maimed during attacks carried out by non-State armed groups or in crossfire between non-State armed groups or between non-State armed groups and the Colombian security forces. In March 2012, for example, four boys and four girls between 14 and 16 years of age were killed in the crossfire when a FARC-EP camp in Meta was attacked by the Colombian army. In October 2012, a 13-year-old girl was killed and another girl injured by the army during an attack against alleged members of FARC-EP in Cauca. In 2012, at least 52 children (32 boys and 20 girls) were injured and 13 children (12 boys and 1 girl) killed by anti-personnel mines or explosive remnants of war.

176. While underreported, girls continued to be victims of sexual violence attributed to members of non-State armed groups. Girls associated with such groups were often forced into sexual relations with adults and, allegedly, to have an abortion if they became pregnant. In March 2012, a 16-year-old girl in Nariño was raped several times by hooded members of an unidentified non-State armed group. In July 2012, an 11-year-old girl was raped by a FARC-EP member in Valle del Cauca. A large proportion of sexual violence is being perpetrated by so-called criminal gangs ("Bacrim"). Since the Government does not acknowledge these non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization process as actors in the armed conflict, victims of sexual violence by them have faced major obstacles in gaining access to benefits under the Victims' Act (Act No. 1448 of 2011). Reports have also been received of cases of sexual violence against children by members of the Colombian security forces. In October 2012 in Nariño, members of the army reportedly sexually abused at least 11 girls, most of them of Afro-Colombian ethnicity, including an 8-year-old girl.

177. Teachers and pupils continued to be targeted and threatened by non-State armed groups for preventing the recruitment of children. In September 2012, for example, three teachers and a head teacher in Arauca were forced into displacement following threats from an unidentified armed group. The military use of schools by the army was reported in several departments. In July 2012, the army used a school

for military purposes in fighting against FARC-EP in Cauca. The infrastructure of the school was damaged and unexploded ordnance found in the vicinity.

178. Although Colombia, as a signatory State to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, made significant efforts to eliminate landmines, contamination by landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices continued to cause mobility restrictions and complicate aid delivery in several departments, including Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo. In the last-mentioned department, for example, landmines laid by FARC-EP have intermittently confined hundreds of civilians and prevented timely assistance from reaching an estimated 1,000 flood-affected families. Restrictions imposed by ERPAC, Las Aguilas Negras, Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños were also reported in urban areas of Antioquia, Cordoba and Valle del Cauca departments. In 2012, more than 46,000 persons, of whom some 30 per cent were children, were internally displaced in 18 departments, affecting rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in particular.

179. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children continued to be disproportionately affected by all grave violations. Among the demobilized children assisted by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, some 8 per cent were indigenous, even though indigenous children constitute just 1.55 per cent of the Colombian population.

180. The Government voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on the condition that any dialogue between the United Nations and armed groups would take place with its consent. There was no contact or dialogue between the United Nations system and non-State armed groups during the reporting period. A general agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace was signed by the Government and FARC-EP in Havana on 26 August 2012, with representatives of Cuba and Norway as guarantors. The issue of children and armed conflict was absent from the agenda.

181. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute provided protection to 264 children (67 girls and 197 boys) who had been separated from non-State armed groups. Children separated from armed groups formed after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations were not systematically referred to the Institute, efforts by the Government of Colombia notwithstanding. Some children were referred to the Attorney General for prosecution. All children, as victims, should be accorded the same benefits and protection, regardless of the group that recruited or used them. The lack of information on cases taken up by the Office of the Attorney General and the limited number of prosecutions involving violations against children remained a challenge. While at least 5,075 children were separated from non-State armed groups by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, to date there have been only 25 convictions for child recruitment, 3 under the Justice and Peace Act (Act No. 975 of 2005) and 22 through the Human Rights Unit of the Office of the Attorney General. Efforts by the Government of Colombia notwithstanding, children continued to face difficulties in gaining access to justice, while impunity for violations against children remained a concern.

182. The early warning system operated by the Office of the Ombudsman prepared a report on recruitment and use of children in Guania, Guaviare, Meta and Vichada to identify the impact of the armed conflict on children and to promote prevention and protection measures. In addition, in November 2012, the Ministry of Defence

issued a law enforcement agencies protocol for the management of sexual violence with emphasis on sexual violence in instances of armed conflict, in addition to an operating charter for its implementation.

India

183. In 2012, the United Nations received reports of violations against children by parties in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha States. Although verification by the United Nations was not possible, the allegations are supported by reports submitted to Parliament. Recruitment and use of children by Maoist armed groups otherwise known as Naxalites, is alleged to have continued during the reporting period. Reports alleged that the Naxalites resorted to large-scale recruitment of children between 6 and 12 years of age into what they term "children's units" (*Bal Sanghatans*) in the affected states. Children were reported to have performed various tasks, including fighting with crude weapons such as sticks or acting as informants. Children as young as 12 years of age were reported to be present in Maoist youth groups and allied militia, handling weapons and improvised explosive devices. Children were reportedly not allowed to leave those associations and faced severe reprisals, including the killing of family members, if they did so. According to government sources, children were reportedly used as human shields by the Maoist armed groups in confrontations with Indian security forces. In Chhattisgarh, seven children were reportedly killed in the crossfire between the Central Reserve Police Force and the Maoist armed groups in June 2012. Reports also indicated that the Maoists destroyed school buildings. The destruction of 267 schools since 2006 by the Maoists, including 3 in 2012, was reported. The number of schools destroyed over the past six years has raised concerns with regard to children's access to education. The Government has stated that it has adopted an integrated approach to address the protection needs of children in areas of civil unrest, especially relating to security, development and good governance.

Pakistan

184. In 2012, Pakistan continued to experience attacks by armed groups using terror tactics and associated with the Taliban and/or Al-Qaida, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Balochistan and urban centres. During the reporting period, at least 91 children were reportedly killed and 137 injured in the course of indiscriminate attacks on public places, largely attributed to TTP. A total of 51 children were reportedly killed by improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs and suicide bombings, 26 by mortar attacks and 14 by landmines and unexploded ordnance. On 24 November 2012, for example, at least four children were reportedly killed in a roadside bomb attack on a procession in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In addition, drone attacks were reported in the tribal areas of Pakistan. No exact data were available on the number of child casualties in those attacks. In one reported case, however, at least five children between 4 and 12 years of age were injured in a drone attack on 24 October 2012 in Tappi village, North Waziristan Agency. The United Nations has no access to those areas to verify the reports.

185. The recruitment, training and use of child suicide bombers by the Taliban, including TTP, in the tribal border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained a concern in 2012. On 4 May 2012, for example, a 15-year-old boy with explosives

strapped to his body reportedly committed a suicide attack in a crowded market place in Bajaur Agency, killing 26 persons and injuring 75. In another incident, on 20 November 2012, a 13-year-old boy from Khyber Agency who was wearing a suicide jacket was reportedly apprehended and detained by the police, along with his adult handler, while entering Peshawar. No exact figures are available on the number of children currently in detention in Pakistan under security regulations. The Government, however, reported that more than 1,150 boys had passed through de-radicalization and skills development programmes in Malakand district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. By the end of 2012, 40 children, including 23 new cases from 2012, were continuing to reside in the Sabaoon rehabilitation and reintegration centre for children taken into custody by the Pakistan security forces for alleged association with armed groups.

186. During the reporting period, armed groups opposed to secular and girls' education, including TTP, increasingly targeted schools, teachers and schoolchildren, in particular girls, in attacks with improvised explosive devices and drive-by shootings. A total of 118 schools, most of which were primary schools, were reportedly damaged or destroyed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (77), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (40) and Balochistan (1) in such armed attacks. On 9 October 2012, TTP gunmen shot and seriously injured 14-year-old schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai and two other schoolgirls who were returning from school in Mingora, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Malala Yousafzai was known as a child activist speaking out against the forced closure of girls' schools by TTP in the Swat valley. In respect of attacks against medical personnel, 11 health workers administering polio vaccinations to children were killed and 4 more injured in targeted attacks in 2012. Of those, 9 health-care workers, including a 17-year-old girl, were killed in a series of attacks between 17 and 19 December 2012 in Karachi, Peshawar, Charsadda and Sindh.

187. In 2012, the Government took policy and legislative steps towards better protection of children, including the approval of a child protection policy for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the extension of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act (2010) to the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas.

Philippines

188. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded 11 incidents of recruitment and use of children, involving 23 boys and 3 girls between 12 and 17 years of age. That figure represents a decrease in 2012, given that there were 26 incidents affecting 33 boys and 21 girls in 2011. Of those cases, 2 were reportedly recruited and used by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, 11 by the New People's Army (NPA), 11 by the Abu Sayyaf Group and 2 by the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

189. That an action plan was signed between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the United Nations in 2009 notwithstanding, Front base commands continued to provide training, weapons and uniforms to children and to use them as guides, messengers and porters. In July 2012, a 16-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl were recruited by the 103rd Base Command in Lanao del Sur Province, provided with martial arts training and used for weapons maintenance. Although the United Nations has no access to the areas under the control of the Bangsamoro Islamic

Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a breakaway faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front led by Commander "Kato", the country task force continued to receive credible reports that the armed group was actively training and providing weapons to children.

190. The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the political wing of NPA, continued to claim that it did not recruit children as combatants, but admitted that it recruited, trained and used them for non-combat purposes. Children continued to be killed and injured as a result of their affiliation with NPA in 2012. On 26 August 2012, for example, the country task force verified the killing of a 17-year-old NPA fighter during hostilities with the national armed forces in Paquibato district, Davao City.

191. The country task force also verified two incidents of recruitment and use of children by the Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu and Basilan, involving at least 11 boys between 13 and 16 years of age. On 14 September 2012, for example, a 13-year-old boy armed with an M-203 grenade launcher was killed during an armed encounter with the national armed forces in Sumisip municipality, Basilan Province.

192. The United Nations remained concerned over the use of children by the national armed forces as guides and informants during military operations. In a verified case in July 2012, the Fifty-Seventh Infantry Battalion forced two boys aged 12 and 13 years to serve as guides to locate an NPA camp in North Cotabato Province. Upon notification of the incident, the national armed forces initiated an investigation on 20 March 2013. During the reporting period, it was also observed that the national armed forces continued to release names and pictures of children to the media, labelling them as members of armed groups.

193. In 2012, the country task force documented 66 cases of killing and maiming of children, of which 4 reportedly implicated the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, 3 NPA, 1 the Abu Sayyaf Group, 14 the national armed forces and 44 unidentified perpetrators. As a result of the attacks, 29 children were reportedly killed and 37 reportedly injured. There were no clashes between the national armed forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2012. Most cases involving the Front related to internecine conflicts within Moro communities. During the reporting period, NPA conducted high-profile attacks on the national armed forces, often at the cost of the civilian population. On 1 September 2012, for example, NPA fighters of the Merardo Arce Command threw a grenade at a military outpost in a civilian community, injuring more than 50 persons, including 12 boys and 9 girls between 4 and 17 years of age.

194. In the course of their counter-insurgency campaign, the national armed forces were reportedly involved in indiscriminate attacks on civilian residences where NPA fighters were allegedly present. In a verified case, two boys aged 8 and 13 years were killed and a 5-year-old girl injured when the Twenty-Seventh Infantry Battalion strafed a house in Kiblawan municipality, Davao del Sur Province, on 18 October 2012. Following the incident, the national armed forces relieved and restricted to their barracks an officer and 11 enlisted personnel, who, at the time of writing of the present report, were undergoing pretrial investigation by the General Court Martial.

195. In 2012, incidents continued to occur in which schools were damaged in the course of hostilities. In July 2012, fighters from the Abu Sayyaf Group partially

burned down Tipo-Tipo Central Elementary School in an effort to distract a military pursuit by the national armed forces after skirmishes in Sumisip municipality, Basilan Province. In August 2012, four schools were reportedly damaged by crossfire during armed encounters between the national armed forces and BIFF in Datu Unsay.

196. The military use of schools remained a concern. In four verified incidents, the national armed forces stationed military units in public elementary schools in Mindanao. In June 2012, the country task force verified that three units of the national armed forces had established a detachment next to Salipongan Primary School in Tugaya municipality, Lanao del Sur Province, resulting in the closure of the school for two weeks.

197. Since the expiry of the action plan between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the United Nations in July 2011, after two years of implementation, the signing of an addendum to extend the action plan remains pending. A significant delay in its implementation notwithstanding, the Front continued to express commitment in principle to the action plan. Recent progress in the peace talks between the Front and the Government, which resulted in the signing in October 2012 of a framework for a comprehensive peace agreement, may accelerate, with the support of the international community, the full implementation of the action plan, including the reintegration of children into civilian life. The framework agreement ensures specific social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups, with particular emphasis on women and children in Bangsamoro areas.

198. In January 2012, a United Nations technical team met members of the NDFP negotiating panel for an initial discussion on child protection concerns. NDFP continued to deny that NPA had children in its ranks, but clarified its position that children of 15 years of age and older might be assigned to NPA self-defence and other non-combat units. On 29 June 2012, NDFP issued a unilateral declaration and programme of action on the rights, protection and welfare of children, in which it refuted the listing of NPA in the present report and rejected the application of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to non-State armed groups and the Paris Principles. The activities put forward in the declaration do not include provisions on United Nations access and compliance monitoring.

199. I am pleased to note that the Government is finalizing the implementation of the monitoring, reporting and response system to prevent and respond to specific incidents of grave violations against children. The national armed forces are also preparing draft guidelines on the conduct of operations inside or within the immediate premises of schools and hospitals, which are expected to be launched as an operational directive during the first half of 2013. In addition, with regard to the use of children during military operations, the national armed forces have issued directives prohibiting such use of children, assigning responsibility to commanders, institutionalizing investigations and putting in place corrective measures.

Southern border provinces of Thailand

200. In 2012, efforts were made by the Government to protect children, who nevertheless continued to be victims of indiscriminate attacks by armed groups in the southern border provinces of Thailand: Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla. As a result of those attacks, which included drive-by shootings and bombings in

crowded public places, 5 children were reportedly killed and at least 48 injured during the reporting period. In one instance, an 11-month-old boy was killed and a 10-month-old boy injured during a drive-by shooting at a tea house in Rangae district, Narathiwat Province. on 11 December 2012. The coordinated bomb attacks in Yala and Hat Yai of 31 March 2012 injured more than 300 civilians, including at least 16 children. The Government is investigating the incidents.

201. During the reporting period, armed groups also continued to carry out targeted attacks against schools and teachers. In 2012, at least 11 schools were partially damaged or destroyed in arson attacks or attacks with improvised explosive devices. On 24 September 2012, a bomb exploded at the entrance of Batu Mitrapap 66 School in Bacho district, Narathiwat Province, injuring two school directors. In another incident, Bang Maruat School in Panare district, Pattani Province, was burned down by militants on 29 November 2012. In addition, 11 incidents of targeted attacks were documented in 2012, resulting in the killing of six teachers and the injuring of eight others, with a worrisome spike in the final quarter of 2012. On 22 November 2012, the director of the Tha Kam Cham School in Nong Chik district, Pattani Province, was killed. As a result, the Confederation of Teachers of Southern Border Provinces closed 332 schools in the region for 10 days. On 11 December 2012, militants entered Ban Ba Ngo School in Mayo district, Pattani Province, and killed the school director and a teacher in front of the children. Some 1,200 government-run schools serving more than 200,000 schoolchildren in the four provinces were closed again for two days for security reasons. In those incidents, military personnel were also victims of the attacks. Since the attacks, the Government has stepped up investigations and boosted security measures.

202. Concern remained over the issue of informal association of children with village defence militias (*Chor Ror Bor*), who allegedly carry out duties similar to formal adult members. In this regard, the Government put in place clear regulations on the non-recruitment of children under the age of 18 years by those militias and sent reminders to all provinces to adhere to the provisions of the policy. The involvement of children in armed forces and armed groups remains to be explicitly criminalized in national legislation. The Government is amending the Child Protection Act of 2003 to explicitly criminalize the involvement of children with armed forces and armed groups.

203. I welcome the fact that the Government and the United Nations country team are engaging in dialogue on access to the southern border provinces to conduct independent verification of and report on alleged violations against children, including through minimum operating modalities. I encourage the Government to strengthen that dialogue with a view to agreeing on the minimum operating modalities to ensure the country team such access.

VI. Recommendations

204. I welcome the signing of action plans by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Somalia, in addition to the progress made by other parties in releasing children. I strongly urge all parties to immediately cease all grave violations against children, and those parties who have been listed in my annual reports for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children,

sexual violence against children and/or attacks on schools and hospitals or protected personnel, and who have not concluded action plans to do so without delay.

205. I note with appreciation that the number of action plans signed or under negotiation continued to increase in 2012. I call upon the donor community to enjoin a discussion to address the funding gaps for the implementation of these action plans and associated monitoring.

206. I call upon Member States to allow independent access to the United Nations for the purposes of monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children and to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups for dialogue, conclusion and follow-up on action plans in order to bring an end to violations, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. Such contact does not prejudge the political or legal status of those non-State armed groups.

207. I am encouraged by the increasing engagement between Member States and the United Nations at the country level for the better protection of children affected by armed conflict. In particular, I should like to highlight the value of interministerial committees as a successful partnership framework with Governments to discuss and follow up on child protection commitments and to foster action plan implementation. In that regard, I call upon Member States concerned to use interministerial committees more widely in cooperation with the United Nations.

208. The toll on children of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is unacceptable and unbearable. Urgent measures must be taken immediately by the parties to protect the lives and dignity of all children. I urge the Government immediately to cease bombardments of civilian areas, including the use of long-range missiles, artillery, air strikes and cluster munitions. The Government should be held responsible for all grave violations committed by groups affiliated to it, including the *shabbiha* and the intelligence forces. I also call upon the Government to put an end to the detention and any form of ill-treatment, including torture, of children for alleged association with the opposition. The use of terror tactics against the civilian population can also not be tolerated. In this regard, I urge all armed opposition groups to put an immediate end to these acts that cost the lives of children in the Syrian Arab Republic and to end the recruitment of children.

209. I reiterate my call upon the Security Council to tackle the issue of persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, with the support of my Special Representative. The Council may wish to consider:

(a) Reaffirming its commitment to dealing with persistent perpetrators by requesting my Special Representative to brief it more regularly, devoting consultations to persistent perpetrators and including child protection as a specific issue of focus when undertaking relevant field visits;

(b) Continuing to consider the application of targeted measures and, in this regard, reviewing information provided in my annual reports to expedite current designation processes;

(c) Requesting its Working Group, in the light of recent discussions on persistent perpetrators, to update its toolkit (see S/2006/724) to include adequate mechanisms to deal with persistent perpetrators and, in this regard, to organize regular sessions on persistent perpetrators and the implementation of action plans.

210. I call upon the Council to continue to support the children and armed conflict agenda by strengthening provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child protection advisers.

211. I call upon the Council to strengthen provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates, recognizing the country situations indicated herein that are without a political or peacekeeping mission and for which responsibility for these issues falls upon the Resident Coordinator.

212. In view of the continuing efforts of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention, mediation and peace support operations, I call upon all those organizations to further mainstream child protection considerations in their guidance and policy development, mission planning, training of personnel and conduct of peace support operations.

213. Compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, with their emphasis on special protection for children, remains key to preventing grave violations against children. In this regard, I welcome the ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict during the reporting period, and I call upon Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify this key legal instrument. I encourage all States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to implement the recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to engage with the Committee and the wider United Nations system in this regard.

VII. Lists in the annexes to the present report[11]

214. In the annexes to the present report, nine new parties to conflict are listed for recruitment and use of children: Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale, Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro and Union des forces républicaines in the Central African Republic; M23 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; MNLA, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in Mali; the Free Syrian Army in the Syrian Arab Republic; and Ansar al-Sharia in Yemen. The listing in my previous reports of Mai Mai groups for recruitment and use of children has been changed into the listing of APCLS under "Colonel Janvier", Mai Mai "Lafontaine" and former elements of PARECO, and Mai Mai "Tawimbi". Six new parties are listed for sexual violence against children: MNLA, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in Mali; M23 and Mai Mai Simba "Morgan" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the government forces in the Syrian Arab Republic.

215. During the previous reporting period, all parties in Nepal and Sri Lanka were delisted after full implementation of their action plans. In 2012, no further violations were recorded by any party in those country situations. While JEM remains listed under the Sudan section of the annexes, it has been removed from the Chad section, given that the United Nations no longer has information indicating that JEM is involved in violations against children on Chadian territory. APRD,

[11] It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In that regard, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing violations.

which signed an action plan with the United Nations in October 2011, released some 1,300 children from its ranks and was dismantled as an armed group in 2012. Since it is no longer active, it has been removed from the annexes. Reference to the self-defence militia supported by the Central African Republic has also been removed, since it is no longer active. In the Sudan, Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will, JEM/Peace Wing and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace Wing have also been removed from the annexes, given that none remains militarily active.

Annex I

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council*[,a]

Parties in Afghanistan

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police.[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

2. Haqqani network[a,b]

3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar[a,b]

4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network[a,b,d]

Parties in the Central African region (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda)

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)[a,b,c]

Parties in the Central African Republic

1. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP).[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

2. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale (CPJP fondamentale), as part of the Séléka coalition[a]

3. Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro (CPSK), as part of the Séléka coalition[a]

4. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)[a]

5. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricain pour la justice (MLCJ)[a]

6. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), as part of the Séléka coalition.[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

7. Union des forces républicaines (UFR), as part of the Séléka coalition[a]

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* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

[a] Parties that recruit and use children.

[b] Parties that kill and maim children.

[c] Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

[d] Parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

Parties in Chad

National Army of Chad.[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC).[a,c] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)[a,c,d]

3. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC)[a,c]

4. Mai Mai Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) "Colonel Janvier"[a]

5. Mai Mai "Lafontaine" and former elements of the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)[a]

6. Mai Mai Simba "Morgan"[c]

7. Mai Mai "Tawimbi"[a]

8. Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23)[a,c]

Parties in Iraq

Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)/Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I)[a,b,d]

Parties in Mali

1. Ansar Dine[a,c]

2. Mouvement national de liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA)[a,c]

3. Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)[a,c]

Parties in Myanmar

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)[a]

2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)[a]

3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).[a] This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.

4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council[a]

5. Karenni Army (KA).[a] This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.

6. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)[a]

7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces.[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

8. United Wa State Army (UWSA)[a]

Parties in Somalia

1. Al-Shabaab[a,b]

2. Somali National Armed Forces.[a,b] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

Parties in South Sudan

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

Parties in the Sudan

1. Government forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), the Sudan police forces (Border Intelligence Forces and Central Reserve Police)[a]

2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)[a]

3. Pro-Government militias[a]

4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid[a]

5. Sudan Liberation Army/Historical Leadership[a]

6. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi[a]

7. Sudan Liberation Army/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim)[a]

8. Sudan Liberation Army/Unity[a]

9. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)[a]

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Free Syrian Army[a]

2. Government forces, including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the *shabbiha* militia[b,c,d]

Parties in Yemen

1. Al-Houthi[a]

2. Ansar al-Sharia[a]

3. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the First Armoured Division, the military police, the special security forces, the Republican Guards and pro-Government militias[a]

Annex II

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations*

Parties in Colombia

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)[a]

2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)[a]

Parties in the Philippines

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)[a]

2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).[a] This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

3. New People's Army (NPA)[a]

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* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

[a] Parties that recruit and use children.